

# Mexican Trails

by

Stanton Davis Kirkham



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**By Stanton Davis Kirkham**

**Mexican Trails**

A Record of Travel in Mexico, 1904-1907, and a Glimpse at the Life of the Mexican Indian.  
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An Application of Practical Psychology to Daily Life.  
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A lone cross in the silent fields.

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the Mexican Indian**

**By**

Author of "The Philosophy of Self-Help," "Where  
Dwells the Soul Serene," "The Ministry of Beauty," etc.

*Illustrated from Original Photographs by the Author*

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BY

STANTON DAVIS KIRKHAM

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

TO THE MEMORY OF  
GENERAL RALPH WILSON KIRKHAM, U. S. A.

A WISE TRAVELLER, AND A GOOD SOLDIER, WHO SERVED  
UNDER GENERAL SCOTT IN THE VARIOUS BATTLES  
WHICH LED TO THE SURRENDER OF  
THE CITY OF MEXICO

THIS BOOK IS  
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED





## FOREWORD

THIS book is a glimpse of Old Mexico as I have caught it, not from the car-window, but from many a trail during three years spent in wandering over the country, from the Border to the Isthmus and from the Atlantic to the Pacific; a look at the little cities of New Spain, which was before Mexico, and a study of the village life of an Indian people who were before New Spain.

Faintly enough, but faithfully I hope, it portrays the *real* Mexico; not the Mexico of the tourist, nor yet that of the man of affairs intent upon exploiting the country for his own ends, and incidentally for the country's welfare, but at the expense, necessarily, of all that is unpractical and picturesque.

Much has been written of Mexico and not a little emphasis laid upon its pos-

sibilities and its progress—that is to say, its Americanisation. One of the richest countries in the world in its minerals and in its agriculture, its wealth is not less great in the element of the picturesque and in its individual charm. Perhaps no apology is needed for another book, devoted more exclusively to this aspect. You may go to Mexico for its commercial advantages; or you may still visit it to elude the commercial spirit altogether, according to your inclination or your needs, and surely there *is* need to-day of escaping now and again from the atmosphere of affairs, of hurry and worry, into one more genial and indolent where money is not everything.

The fascination of Mexico is unlike that felt in other nooks and corners of the Old World. There are suggestions of one or another country, but they are nothing more. One is aware of a charm which would seem to be essentially Mexican—as the perfume of the gardenia is peculiarly its own—due in part to age, in part to a marvellous landscape, in part to the funda-

mentally picturesque life which finds here an adequate setting. The churches and haciendas which dominate the plain do not merely recall the Past; they are the living embodiment of that Past, and still represent Colonial Spain. On the other hand, Indian villages all over Mexico are little more Spanish than a Hopi pueblo is American.

On the great plateau the outlook is one of the most desolately beautiful on earth. Its colours are those of the desert; its silence, that of eternity; its distances, ample and satisfying, so that the spirit rejoices at the vast perspective. On the edge of orange-coloured deserts float ragged purple mountains, and beyond them, like the waves of the sea, range upon range of ethereal blue fade imperceptibly into a remote horizon. Over this expanse the sun rises and sets as upon a world of opal.

At a suitable elevation on the western slope of the plateau the climate is superior to that of any part of Southern Europe, from Andalusia to the shores of the Bos-

phorus, or indeed of Egypt. However, there is a marked difference between the eastern and western slopes; the Pacific side is dry, the Atlantic damp and rainy, and more or less affected by the northers from the Gulf. Almost any town on the western slope, with an elevation of not more than six thousand nor less than four thousand feet, possesses a delightful climate. In this region the temperature is highest in April and May. By June the summer rains have begun, lasting into November. Rain falls usually in the afternoon, rarely if ever in the morning, while during the winter and spring months it seldom rains at all.

In Mexico the standard of hotels is not high. The Mexicans have none of the knack of French and Italian cooks, and more food is ruined than in any other country save India. I have read that the cooking is good and that the people are musical, but in three years have found nothing to substantiate either statement.

Of all beautiful places, one of the most charming is the Valley of Morelos, a half

day's journey to the south of the Valley of Mexico and separated from it by the lofty range of the Ajusco. Much of my time has been passed in this region, and some part of the book is devoted to the life in and about Cuernavaca, once the capital, so called, of the Tlahuican Indians and now the capital of the State of Morelos. Subjected first by the Aztecs and subsequently by the Spaniards, Cuernavaca became the estate of the redoubtable Cortez. Through it passed the famous old trail from Acapulco to the City of Mexico, over which were transported the rich cargoes of the Spanish galleons from the East, unloaded at Acapulco, to be carried across Mexico to the Gulf and reloaded for Castile. The life of these Indians has changed little, even in Cuernavaca itself, where they are brought in contact with the tourist—one of the most demoralising influences to which any primitive people may be subjected; while a few hours' ride in any direction brings one to *pueblitos* which have remained substantially unaltered, and whose inhabitants

know no more of the outside world than does the cañon wren which sings from the lava walls of the fields, or the caracara soaring overhead. In writing of this life I have, I believe, drawn a true picture of the Mexican Indian to-day, who, while he may be the despair of the business man, is none the less the joy of the traveller who surveys him with more leisurely and poetic glance.

From this Vale of Tempe nestling among the mountains of Morelos, my wanderings have taken me to Orizaba and Cordova, a day's railway journey from Mexico City, to Puebla and Cholula, nearer at hand, to Oaxaca, a day and night's ride, and to Mitla; again south to Tehuantepec, a full two days' trip over the Vera Cruz and Pacific and Tehuantepec roads. Later I went westward to Morelia, Patzcuaro and Uruapam, some three hundred miles, and thence on horseback across the Sierra, coming at length to Chapala; westward still to Tuxpan and over the old trail to Colima and the Pacific. Returning by way of Gaudalahara, I presently

found myself on the trail to Guanajuato, where my journey came to an end. Sometimes no more than a week has been spent in a place; in others several months; sometimes a week in the saddle, and this is the real way to see Mexico. For, while your horse takes you over unbeaten tracks ever farther from civilisation, he takes you as by some enchantment ever further from the Present.

These three years have witnessed some significant changes in Mexico. Nothing could better indicate the character and wisdom of the government than the currency reform recently carried out. The opening of the Tehuantepec Railroad connecting the Atlantic and Pacific, the creation of the office of Vice-President, the attitude of Mexico to the Central American imbroglio, are among the propitious signs of the times. On the other hand the steady growth of labour troubles, instigated more or less by foreign agitators, bodes ill. What is worse, I have seen one of the most charming towns in Mexico completely desecrated by the garish signs of

an American advertiser. More than one murder has taken place in the good old-fashioned way, for the bandits are not all dead; and more than once there have been rumours of summary justice, meted out in the equally good old-fashioned way of lining up the "bad men" against a wall and shooting them. Even so, the most desolate regions of Mexico are safer to-day than the streets of New York or Chicago.

While some complain of the attitude of the peons to foreigners, I have found it on the whole not only courteous but kindly. They will throw unseemly epithets, it is true, but only once have they thrown stones at me. Compared with that of an Arab, a Turk, or a Chinaman on his own soil, their conduct is exemplary. The enjoyment of travel, so easily marred by even covert hostility, suffers little here on that score; but indeed it would require much to offset the wonderful charm of Mexico, for few countries better repay the traveller.



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# MEXICAN TRAILS

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## CHAPTER I

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

IT is surely a good omen that one's impression of Mexico should so perceptibly brighten as the journey progresses. First is the desert of Chihuahua—the promised land lies far to the south. El Paso is the gateway to the great barren plateau—and to Cloudland. Superb white cumuli, piled Ossa on Pelion, and little fleece-like clouds, ethereal and evanescent as frost-work, drift and vanish above the bold ranges and volcanic peaks of the Sierra Madre, wrapped in its violet mantle. Always the beautiful mountains are in view, the protean clouds on the horizon,

and the cactus-dotted plain stretching far in the distance, silent, sombre, and reposeful.

In the dry season the fine dust of the desert fills the car, so that I found myself suspended as it were in a nebulous haze. Round about floated others, good-natured sun-burned mining men, for the most part, going to Chihuahua, to Torreon, and Durango way, who sat jammed in their seats with huge old gripsacks of a size not seen out of Mexico.

When, however, the train stopped at one of the clusters of adobe huts, it was evident we had merely been travelling in the centre of a little cloud of dust, which had kept pace with us. The air itself is like crystal. The very light appears to be of richer and purer quality than elsewhere, lying with a soft and opaline lustre over the world. Not less impressive than the marvellous colour is the silence, which seemed instantly to engulf one. Far away stretched the wonderful desert, casting over me, as over the first nomad, its irresistible spell.

It is through such vast and beautiful



solitudes, broken at distant intervals by little cities of New Spain with their splendid old churches, that one approaches the City of Mexico. Creeping along the ridge of the world with glimpses, now of a mediæval hacienda, again of a crowd at the station — vivid, picturesque, semi-Oriental—more and more is one impressed with the foreignness of it all. It is no border civilisation, the vague, nondescript, characterless life which reflects the combined mediocrity of two peoples, but virile, distinctive, and full of character. It is, from the first, Mexican ; that is to say, as remote, strange, and un-American as well can be. Upon the weary traveller the force of its novelty and charm descends like an inspiration.

Somehow I had conceived of Mexico as a gay capital. In this respect the fine old city is a surprise, for such gaiety as it may possess is apparently of society alone. It is unique in that by no stretch of a normal imagination may it be likened to Paris. A city of four hundred thousand people, the life of the street, the café, the hotel,

is provincial. Moreover it is serious,—Spanish in its gravity. In the café is little vivacity, much less hilarity. Its hotels, cold and solemn places, bespeak a grave decorum; as do its shops, where long files of clerks stand on guard, peering out into the sunshine like prisoners from their cells.

But who can describe these diamond mornings? So delicious is the air that one is conscious of breathing. Here are we driving in the Paseo as if it were June instead of December—June in the Elysian fields. Chapultepec is in bloom and in song; while above the lovely Valley of Mexico loom the ghostly volcanoes, visions of infinite calm in their ageless, deathless beauty. One cherishes these early hours all the more that the afternoon is less to be depended on, and at this elevation the nights are cold.

It is a surprise to find the peon class so largely in the majority as it is here and so distinct in type and in costume. Interest may easily centre about the Zocalo, and in the cathedral which stands facing it;

for this plaza is still, as it has ever been, the place of the people—and it is they who are interesting. Like the Desert, the Indian is the last to change.

Pleasant it is to smoke a cigar here after breakfast, while leisurely surveying this parti-coloured village life in the heart of a city. Respectable old Mexicans placidly puff their cigarettes, enjoying the air, their native courtesy never permitting them for a moment to smile or to show their appreciation of Spanish “as she is spoke,” should you engage them in a little conversation. When two cronies meet on the street, they put their arms about one another, patting each other’s back with unaffected joy, and they part hat in hand.

There should be swarms of beggars but there are not. One expects them and is agreeably disappointed. So picturesque are the people that the streets are alive with possible models. *Cargadores* trot patiently by with enormous crates of tomatoes and baskets of oranges on their backs. Ragged boys nimbly pursue each other with trays of *dulces* deftly balanced

in air. The Indian skull being flattened at just the right place, a jar of water, a tray of fruit, or a small coffin all fit naturally on the head. In at the cathedral door flock dreary women in black,—this one sombre note but a foil for the cotton rags, straw sombreros and bright-hued zerapes of the peons.

On two sides of the plaza are *portales*, in which are good shops, all bearing fantastic names, so that I found myself reading the signs like any countryman. Hat stores predominate, wherein are displayed the most ornate sombreros. These *sombrererías* are as much a feature of Mexico as are millinery shops of Paris, for here it is the men who are vain in this respect, the women having just begun to wear hats at all. There are vast sombreros of grey, covered with silver; some of white, embroidered with purple flowers; others of maroon or plum colour. At all hours groups of peons stand gazing at these with admiring eyes, though they themselves sport only battered straw. Under the arches innumerable little booths of

itinerant venders cluster as thickly as swallows' nests on a cliff. Here trinkets and all conceivable odds and ends are for sale, and there is great display of lottery tickets.

In the Zocalo the band plays for the peon ; for the more cultivated ear there is music in the Alameda. He whose forefathers wielded the obsidian war-club, and ate the hearts of their captives, is here beguiled by the toot and wheeze of a brass band. What shades of brown and yellow time and dirt dye these sombreros, and what infinite rolls and twists may be given to the vast brims, like the myriad forms of autumn leaves. One rolls his thus, and another thus, as suits his taste, and always it is a fitting frame for his dark Malayan or semi-Mongol face, which becomes tranquil as he wraps his zerape about him and listens to the rag-time of the band. It is remarkable enough that such a yellow man in such a hat, with a consciousness so remote from that which evolved these brisk airs, should yet be amenable to this Teuton influence. Among

the mahogany countenances are types Japanese and Malayan, and very rarely an almost classic Aryan face, but never the great pumpkin-head of Thibet.

Dear to the heart of the Indian is the cathedral—superb reminder of a by-gone age—with its dim twilight recesses, its mystery, its silence. Rising from the very ruins of the great *teocalli*, a place historic and of grim associations, he is drawn to it by some instinct of his race. Here come the multitude in their rags and all their unwashed charm, looking unspeakably aged, many of them, and subdued to the last degree. Once they were bold and free, as the wild ancestor of the horse was free ; now they are tamed, submissive, meek, as the poor pack-animal, the beast of burden. Degenerate and broken in spirit, it is next to impossible to realise that they descend from proud and war-like stock ; that they ever had a more or less enlightened polity, and some traits almost Roman. They are one with the poor Hebrew of Palestine and the fellah of Egypt—a relic, a faded old garment.

Only the archæologist, the antiquarian, the scholar, appreciate what they have been. If you wish to see how the meek are inheriting the earth, go to Mexico. But they themselves are not sad; they no more brood over their fall than does the horse.

In spite of trolley cars and coaches, you may still conjure up a bit of the ancient Aztec city as you stroll the streets. The Past is masquerading as the Present. Mexico, which has received the stamp of more than one pseudo-civilisation, reveals, with the settled aspects of age, some of the newness of the South-west. Notwithstanding this mingling of Western and European life, the strongest impress is from neither, but from the Aztec itself. To this day the population is largely Indian.

If one is unprepared for this, it is not less surprising to find monastic orders so conspicuous by their absence in a country associated in one's mind with Franciscans and Dominicans. In spite of the historic facts—the separation of Church and State

in 1856, the confiscation of Church property and the suppression of monasteries—the full significance of all this is realised only when face to face with it. Never a monk's garb is to be seen, nor are the priests much in evidence. The problem which sorely tries France to-day was solved in Mexico with the aid of bayonets fifty years ago. At that time my hotel was the infirmary of the great Franciscan monastery; the stable adjoining—a rare old building—was the refectory; while the Calle Independencia, on which they front, was cut through the monastery garden when the monastery was suppressed and the monks arrested for treason in September of that year.

On the east side of the Plaza stands the National Palace, a vast rather than imposing structure, devoted to government offices. The President has his residence elsewhere and may occasionally be seen abroad, surrounded by his body-guard. He looks what he is—the Man of Iron, the most forceful character in Mexico. Whatever was done in the sixteenth cen-



tury was the work of Cortez, a fine old pirate in his day, who was responsible for everything but the climate. Whatever is effected in Mexico to-day is the work of Porfirio Diaz. In himself the central power reaching out to every State and controlling it, this one man has established law and order and maintained it as only a Man of Iron could. The idea of stability has taken root in the public mind, to which formerly it was altogether alien. We, who have a civic consciousness, which they have not, can not but wonder with regard to his successor and the future of the Mexican. Yet it is certain that the people have lost the old habit of revolution; the country is running smoothly in the groove of good government, and it is likely to continue. But the President is beyond the simple minds of the peons, who have, it may be, no conception above a *jefe politico*. With no political ideas, no vote, they perhaps do not know that they live in a nominal republic.

In the Paseo is an imposing statue of Guatimotzin, the last of the Aztec kings.

The hero of the great drama of the Conquest, he had all the energy, the courage, the ability, which the feeble Montezuma lacked. Not only a hero, Guatimotzin was a gentleman—which is more than one can say of Napoleon, for instance. The gods had reserved him for an unhappy fate. To the credit of the peons, be it said, that heroic figure has still some significance, whatever it may be. But if it inspires any vision of Aztec splendour, it takes them perhaps no further than the pulque-shop and ends in a fuddled dream.

Old coaches rattle along the Paseo, the *pilmamas* grasping the children that they may not altogether protrude from the vehicle; the elders dignified, the daughters circumspect, taking their pleasure solemnly. But the peon goes his way oblivious of family coaches and chief magistrates. Wrapping his zerape about him he trudges softly on his *guarachas*. Republic or empire, it is all one to him—it is his *tierra* still. Cathedral or *teocalli*, it fills the same need; the blue and gold images of the saints take the place of the stone idols

of his forefathers. "*Nieve! Nieve!*" wails the ice-cream man, his freezer nicely balanced on his head, and his voice is as the disconsolate cry of the lost. "*Dulces!*" cries the sweet-meat seller in more mellifluous tones; while ever and anon the vender of lottery tickets—the omnipresent genius of the streets—approaches in the person of one harpy or another. "Ten thousand dollars!" she says seductively, holding out her tickets, "ten thousand dollars, señor!"

Appreciative folk, who have long imbibed the spirit of the land, talk much of the "Mexican habit." Already I am coming to realise what it means. One may be laying the foundations for it while sitting in the Zocalo, loitering in the cathedral, or sauntering under the ahuehuets of Chapultepec and in the by-roads of Coyoacan. Far from being the inertia of the tropics, it is an infatuation pure and simple. One might have a Japanese, an Italian, or possibly a French habit, but none of them would quite resemble this. The glamour of Mexico is not that of any

other country. It is in the air, the sunshine, and the marvellous landscape ; in the beautiful old towers and domes and sculptured façades ; in the gentle indolent people and the musical voices of children. The infatuation with these, results in the "habit," which one acquires without being able to define it.

## CHAPTER II

### A MEXICAN SUNDAY

THIS Sunday morning, as on many another, I find myself in the cathedral. The great church woos with subtle power, and its open doors invite one to enter. Assuredly no doctrine preached there has such attraction; rather does it lure by the silence, the perspective, the mysterious shadows and dim recesses, and by the spirit of peace brooding over all. For centuries a refuge from the world, it has become surcharged with the reverent character of the thoughts which have filled it, until now, as if the inanimate stone had absorbed this spirit, the venerable walls reflect it again in a continual benign effluence.

To the peon it is a haven in which he derives solace in this world with hope of

the next. He does not associate it with Sunday especially. It is always open—is for every day.

Entering, the buzz and din cease, and one is in another and consecrated world. So eloquent is the silence that any preaching seems superfluous. Here is the twilight and the stillness of the forest—so cool it is, so calm and secluded. All tones are subdued as if to correspond with the devout thoughts of the kneeling figures with their black rebosos drawn close about them. The dazzling sunlight and parti-coloured life of the Zocalo seem infinitely remote.

At the base of a great pillar I find a seat opposite the choir. Far in the distance a figure, holding a lighted candle, kneels before a shrine, the candle flickering in the sombre dusk. A stout and venerable padre comes down the aisle, followed by a procession of choir-boys in red and white. More than once he stops on his way to the little door in the choir to speak to one or another, and the women reverently kiss his fat hand. His kindly



Open doors invite one to enter.





face seems to express approval of his generous proportions, as much as to say, "Let them fast and pray who will, but no fasting for me."

Shafts of light strike aslant the vast grey interior, and fall on the old onyx pulpits and on the dusky gold of the great altar with its pillars of malachite. Six priests in vestments of violet, of scarlet, and gold, stand before the altar, and boys swing silver incense-burners, the incense rising higher and higher and mingling at last with the shafts of light. The onyx, malachite, and gold, the rich wood carvings of the choir, the old vellum books dimly seen within, lying open on antique stands, the flickering candles in the shadowy distance, and the gorgeous vestments of the priests create one superb harmony of tone as of some marvellous old tapestry.

The chapel of the Virgin of Guadalupe and that of San Felipe appear to be the beloved of the people. In the faces of the kneeling worshippers one sees the whole gamut of human expression. Such great wistful eyes look out from closely

drawn rebosos ; and now and again those so bold. Here are the suppliant and the penitent ; criminal faces also, and those from which all human interest and feeling have faded and which look beyond to some shadowy hope not of this world.

A swarthy little man, with bristling hair and moustache, prays long and fervently, while his small pig-eyes rove this way and that, ceaselessly darting sly and furtive glances at those around. Near him a crippled woman has dragged herself to the railing on her knees by the aid of a pair of short crutches. Dropping the papers and lottery tickets she carried for sale, and grasping the iron bars, she bursts into tears. Presently a fat old lady bustles up with much ado, crosses herself with an air, as if powdering her face, and bustles away again without so much as a glance at the others.

The Indians from the outlying villages of the Valley of Mexico add most colour and interest to the cathedral. They come to it as their forefathers went to the *teocallis* ; doubtless it is still to them a

temple to the god of their ancestors. Wonder and adoration are depicted in their faces as they wander about in little bands, gazing upward at the frescoed dome, and stopping now and then before the chapel of some familiar and friendly saint. They kiss the tasselled cord about the waist of San Felipe, standing on his pedestal with fresh roses in both hands, while the more devout kiss the steps of the chapel of Guadalupe. Some go upon their knees, with burning candles in their hands, the flame throwing into relief their queer Aztec heads.

At the side door of the cathedral sits a strange little man, not over two feet high and apparently without legs. Strapped in a chair, he is as immovable as an image of stone, and as silent. Never does he whine nor solicit alms, as most beggars do, and so I often go out by this door purposely to leave a few coppers. A certain evident dignity rests upon him and one is somehow made to feel that it is he who confers a favour. When I first saw him, he brought to mind the story of the

poet Saadi—who, entering a village, came to the door of the mosque, lamenting that he had no shoes; whereupon he chanced to see a man without feet, and immediately taking counsel with himself, no longer cried out against his lot.

Sunday in Mexico is the outcome of the idea that the Sabbath was made for Man, rather than Man for the Sabbath; a continental Sunday, discredibly genial and unfamiliar with Puritan views. Leaving the cathedral by the side door, where sits the little man without feet, one is near the flower market, which in the early morning is as refreshing in its way as a gentle shower, or the morning itself, a charming bit of life, colour, and beauty. A replica of the old flower market in Florence, it lacks the bronze boar. The Mexicans have a trick—which the Florentines have not—of sticking their roses on toothpicks and then torturing the innocent petals to make them look like camellias. They also paint them. But there are as well great heaps of roses, unimpaled and unpainted, and a splendour

of purple pansies and scarlet poppies which have come from Mixcoac, and from La Viga in boat-loads, with the freshness of the dawn still upon them, to radiate it again in the heart of the city. Walk among these flowers in the early morning and the day is somehow coloured and perfumed by them.

Across the Zocalo from the cathedral lies the Thieves' Market. This is likewise in full blast and fairly hums with the haggling of many soft voices. On week-days it may be comparatively deserted, but Sunday mornings it is crowded to overflowing. Odds and ends from the uttermost parts of Mexico, gathered by hook or by crook, flow hither by devious channels—for here the thieves dispose of their plunder.

On the counter of one booth, a pair of spectacles reposes in a butter-dish and some castanets in a plate of old Puebla ware. Bibles and crucifixes hobnob with frying-pans and *brasseros*. From a dust-covered frame, St. Lawrence or another looks out from his gridiron in mute agony.

There are Mexican spurs with rowels five inches across, and huge antique locks of excellent workmanship, associated in times gone by with the chests of grandees whose bones have long since mouldered. Among this curious assortment is a stringless guitar, while on a cord stretched across the ramshackle booth, a rosary of ivory with a little silver crucifix hangs by the side of a bedraggled Spanish mantilla.

What tales they could tell,—the lace Mantilla, the old Guitar and the Rosary with the little silver crucifix! Having played their part in the game, they have come to this. How often did the Guitar pour out its passion under some barred window of old Seville, while the Mantilla listened behind the grating. And the Rosary with its beads so worn was perchance the confidant of the lace Mantilla, learning that which was not even to be whispered.

And now at last, silence and neglect—more eloquent than speech. Even the castanets which lie in the cracked soup-plate,—as I look at them I hear the stamp

of a little foot with its arched instep, and see the defiant toss of the head, the voluptuous swaying of the lithe body.

"*Quanto vale el brassero?*" inquires a soft voice at my elbow. Intent upon the battered utensils, an Indian woman sways her baby, without looking up.

"It is yours," I answer, coming back to the present and relishing the joke as I catch sight of the vender himself—a greasy wretch.

At the unexpected reply she glances up, her face wreathed in smiles. "Ah!"—with a laugh—"the señor does not sell these things."

While I am considering how to pass the afternoon in a manner befitting the traditions of Mexico, a car bearing the magic word *Toro* approaches—surely an intimation that I should go to the bull-fight.

Arrived at the ring, I secure a place among the cheapest seats, to see the spectators rather than the bull-fight. Seats in the amphitheatre are sold according to the sunny or the shady side, designated as

"Sol" and "Sombra"; so I find myself among a compact and sweltering mass of brigands in the broiling sun, smoking vigorously meanwhile to ward off the encompassing fumes.

There is but a single feature of a bull-fight one can enjoy—the entrance of the bull into the ring, alert, fearless, unconquered. The superb poise of his head as he looks around the arena, pawing the ground in splendid defiance, is something to be remembered. But the rest is a horrid spectacle to Anglo-Saxon sensibilities, which can scarcely regard with complacency the butchery of blindfolded spavined horses.

Looking into the sea of faces one beholds the wild animal glowering there, the beast in every man come to the surface. The cruelty of the Spaniard and the savagery of the Aztec exult in the barbaric scene. That vengeful spirit which has been the genius of inquisitions and of immolations, rises triumphant and renews itself. The *canaille* roar for blood, hissing if it does not flow fast enough,



while high up in the boxes in the shade one can see the eager faces and bright dresses of Mexican ladies. Imagination conjures up the Colosseum, hears the cries of the Roman populace, sees the thumbs turned down.

The *matador* bows his acknowledgments to the people, the *capeadores* pick up the hats and cigars flung into the ring, as I extricate myself from the mass in which I am wedged. Another bull enters—a splendid animal—and tries to shake off the colours of the hacienda, depending from a dart thrust into his shoulder. Throwing back his head, he stands poised for an instant—a poise for a sculptor—then charges furiously, only to be met by the lance of a *picador*.

It is not far to Chapultepec and instinctively I turn into the quiet gardens to efface the crude and jarring scene of the bull-ring. Skirting the rocky base of the hill, the path leads under the great ahuehuets which sheltered Montezuma himself and the tzins of ancient Tenochtitlán. Violets bloom in profusion and ivy gera-

niums hang over the rocks above. The air is filled with perfume, and the liquid warble of the crimson-throated finch descends from the branches.

A solid line of carriages comes up the Paseo and winds around Chapultepec. There are well appointed turn-outs in scores, for this drive is *the* amusement of the classes, as immutable an institution as the bull-fight or the pulque-shop with the masses. Social life is restricted; they do not play golf or tennis; they have no informal entertainments, and make little of the theatre. They have occasional balls and—they drive in the Paseo.

The little orchestra is playing in the casino. Tables are full; some people smoke with their soup and everybody tries to talk above the music.

But on the other side of the garden it is very quiet. Here the world does not intrude and I am left to the contemplation of the ahuehuets and the violets growing at their feet.

## CHAPTER III

### IN TACUBAYA

WHATEVER cosmopolitan airs the City of Mexico may wear, they are left behind when one goes out to Tacubaya—that is to say, the Tacubaya of the people. Here are, to be sure, large estates, of which vistas may be caught at the porter's gate, but they affect not at all the life and character of the village streets and lie concealed and guarded within their high walls. Now, Tacubaya is just beyond Chapultepec—the Hill of the Grasshopper.

The long narrow street between one-storied shops of blue and pink and buff, the encircling mountains, the soft skies, are Italian; while the brown, bare-legged people, squatting on the ground in picturesque rows and groups, their dark skins

showing through cotton rags, recall faintly the village scenes of India. But here are no caste-marks, no ash-besmeared fakirs, no nose-rings, and everywhere sombreros in place of turbans or shaven heads. Under rude sun-shades women sit beside little charcoal fires, surrounded by their wares. They are the restaurateurs of the village.

In Tacubaya I do as the Tacubayans; I too sit me down in the dust beside a maiden and her tortillas, though she is far from fair.

Over the charcoal *brassero* rests a tray, dented in the centre and piled at its edges with tortillas. Into this dent she puts a lump of lard, and, as the fat sputters in the improvised frying-pan, drops in a tortilla. After leaving it for a minute she covers it with red chile sauce, deftly rolls it, sprinkles with grated cheese, and hands it to me. For this she asks two centavos.

"But in Tacubaya they pay only one. Have I not sat here and watched them?" She gives me a sly look as she accepts the penny, as much as to say, "Well, you *are* a knowing Gringo."

While I eat my tortilla I have ample entertainment. If there is dirt there is also novelty, and this particular spot is a little less infested with dogs than the rest of the street; for the dogs are as those of Stamboul.

A toiling peon extricates his head from the strap that holds the load on his back, takes some tortillas from a cotton cloth, and, squatting in the dust, buys a centavo's worth of frijoles in a little earthen saucer. Warming a tortilla for a moment over the charcoal, he rolls it into a cylinder, and dips it into his dish, where it serves as a spoon. With each mouthful his spoon grows shorter, and is finally consumed with the last of the beans. Some buy tortillas with a little meat inside; others *chili con carne*, which they eat from earthen dishes. A boy is selling slices of pineapple and bits of cocoanut from a board carried on his head. I indulge in a slice of pineapple by way of dessert, while a very old man buys one small dish of *chili con carne*, sharing it with a woman as old and as

ragged as he. My dessert seems an extravagance.

Presently out of the moving throng comes a boy, his sombrero under his arm filled to the brim with scraps of raw pork. From numerous holes in the crown the pork is making its way out. He does not go far before a woman stops him, buying a small quantity, to which she is served from the hat. In payment she gives him a piece of silver, whereupon he unrolls one trouser leg, extracts some coppers with which to make change, and, after stowing away the newly acquired coin in the folds, proceeds on his way. Surely I am penetrating the secrets of Tacubaya.

It is curious to be a part of this throng and to touch ever so remotely a life to them reality, but to me a phantasmagoria. Like a tide of colour the ever-moving crowd flows between the blue and pink walls of pulque-shops; zerapes of red, zerapes of blue and of purple, some striped, others spotted. Strings of burros laden with panniers slowly pick their way. A brown boy, his feet stained a deep purple,

drives a flock of turkeys with a long whip, the gobblers gleaning their food from the street as they go. "He makes believe he has shoes," says an old man in response to my query.

The pulque-shops appeal to the eye with all their cheap and tawdry show, and with such seductive names as "La Superba," "La Illusion," "La Mar." Men and women are thronging in and out of them—occasionally a woman with a baby on her back. I abandon myself with the rest to the seduction, and, approaching the shrine of Bacchus, drink my first and last glass of pulque. It tastes like poor cider and smells like old cheese. If the cup does not inebriate, neither does it cheer.

The long narrow streets invite one to saunter—past the ancient church, with its exterior so rich and mellow, and the butcher shops, where pictures of the Virgin of Gaudalupe and burning tapers greet one from above the dangling pigs—out between the high walls which enclose enticing gardens.

Barred windows project into the street, and now and again a face peers between the bars as from a prison cell. Roses and trumpet creepers hang over the road in profusion. The delicate perfume of flowers is wafted from beyond the walls, and always the birds are singing. Iron gates reveal charming vistas of patios within, of shaded walks and graceful pepper-trees. Here are the summer homes of wealthy Mexicans, while in the village goes on that primitive life all unconcerned. If perchance one falls to musing on the departed grandeur of Aztec and Spaniard, some bit of actual life presents itself which quickly dissipates any musty reflections.

My whim takes me beyond the village into the open country. In a sluggish stream on the borders of a maguey field women are washing clothes, and hanging them on the extended leaves of the maguey to dry. Patient burros plod by, lost to view under their loads of grass, their woolly noses alone protruding from the moving mass. Far away on the plain, clouds of dust indicate other droves com-



ing towards the city, and from out these slowly moving clouds come now and again the audible lamentations of the invisible donkeys.

In the maguey field a peon is going from plant to plant, a pigskin on his back and a long gourd in his hand. As he climbs upon the fleshy leaves and bends over the centre of the plant, he seems some curious insect, visiting flowers for their pollen and nectar. In place of pollen-sacks he has his pigskin, while he sticks the gourd into the sap-bowl, as a bee might insert his proboscis into the nectar-cup of a flower. Crossing the field, he climbs up into a maguey, and with a scoop-shaped knife hollows out a bowl in the centre, where would otherwise develop the stalk.

"When will you get pulque from that?" I ask.

"In eight days there will be *agua miel*," he replies. *Agua miel* is the crude sap, which needs only to be fermented to become pulque.

After scooping out the bowl in the

stalk, he descends from his perch among the leaves and trots off to another plant. Whenever he finds sap he inserts the gourd, which has a hole at either end. By withdrawing the air at one end the liquid flows in at the other, and is subsequently transferred to the pigskin. It seems still that I am pursuing some huge insect, as one might follow a bee from flower to flower.

Here the houses are not of plaster, but of adobe merely, with board roof held down by large stones. On every roof a row of melons is ripening in the sun. In one doorway a woman is grinding corn for tortillas, kneeling on the ground before a *metate*, upon which she scrapes it to and fro with a stone. From time to time she sprinkles water, adds another handful of corn, and grinds away as before. It is hard manual labour, and the sinews stand out on her brown arms. A motherly old duck waddles about the floor, helping herself to stray kernels, and presently two chickens enter from the road. In the cave-like interior an old woman encourages

the fire with a straw fan, such as they sell at the corn-and-bean shops, while the smoke, finding no other exit, pours out of the door and through chinks in the roof. At length the dough is kneaded, and the woman, weary with her work, sits back and lights a cigarette, while I turn my steps towards Mexico.

Like all Mexican villages, Tacubaya has its innumerable fiestas. Life to the peon is a series of these, the working days being merely interpolated. In describing the usual life of the village one should really choose a fête day. To the Old-World category of the saints has been added a list of Mexicans, and all must be celebrated. The Virgin appears under many titles—she is Our Lady of This and Our Lady of That. The peon reckons by another year than we: his is a saints' calendar. He is forever either preparing for a saint's day or recovering from one. He attends the fêtes of the adjoining villages and the adjoining villages come to his.

The second of February being the fiesta of "Nuestra Señora de las Candelarias," I

happened in Tacubaya and found the village in celebration, its people somewhat in gala attire—somewhat in pulque. Booths in which were gambling-games of one sort or another had been erected all along the village street—a slender inheritance from the days when Tacubaya was called the Monte Carlo of Mexico and the hacendados came to play, bringing wheelbarrow loads of pesos. A large sign intimated there would be a *funcion de gallos hoy*—a cock-fight to-day. At little roulette tables, the proprietor urged the crowd in persuasive tones to take a hand.

“*Venga muchachos!*—one cent a chance!”

High-pitched voices, accompanied by the desultory strumming of guitars, issued from one or another booth and I listened in vain for a bit of the wild gipsy strain, that sombre cadence, so common in the music of Andalusia and Granada.

The churchyard was decorated with many little blue and white paper flags, while in the four corners were shrines resplendent with candelabra and embowered

in flowers. Under the great trees the people awaited the procession of the candles which, I was told, was soon to start. Mass was being celebrated, and many unable to get into the church knelt without the door, the array of zerapes making a fine bit of colour against the mellow background of the church.

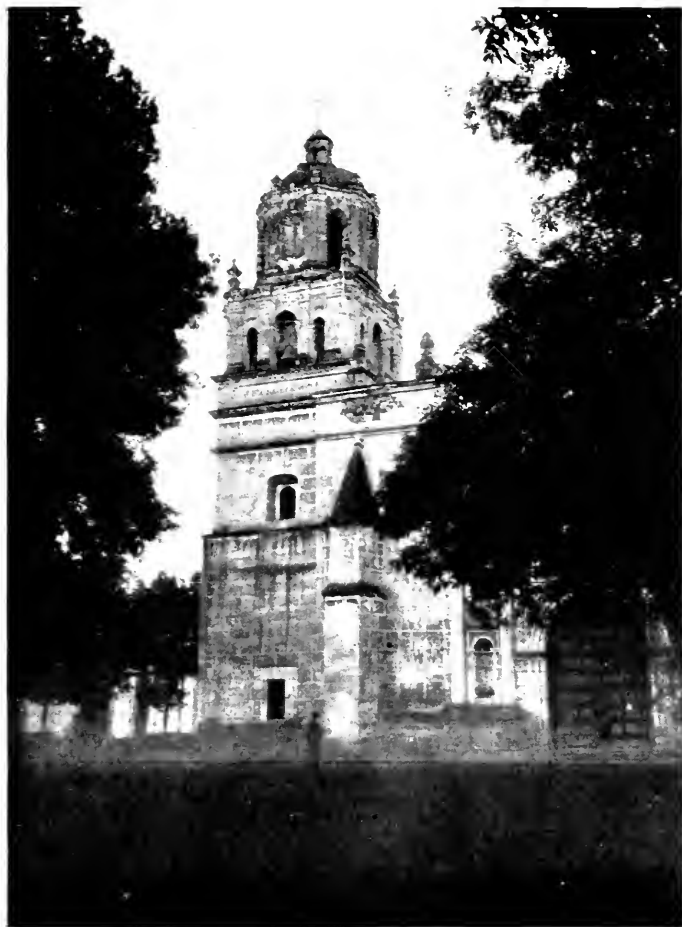
Day was drawing to a close when suddenly the bells in the tower went wild, turning complete somersaults and fairly smiting the air with their clamour. The crowd before the door made way, as the procession appeared, headed by acolytes bearing the great candelabra of the church, and priests in rich vestments, while an image of the Virgin was borne aloft on the backs of a dozen Indians. Little girls in white veils followed and lastly came a great throng of women, some hundreds in number—each in her black reboso, bearing a lighted candle.

Slowly the long procession wound its way around the churchyard, the myriad lights twinkling in the deepening shadows, the image swaying at its head. As it ap-

proached, the crowd knelt along its course and lifted up their candles. Before each of the shrines it paused, the bells ceased for the time, and in the abrupt silence a chant arose, a clear sweet vibration; again the bells pealed, the rapt faces passed, the myriad flickering candles moved slowly onward. As the last one disappeared within the church, night seemed suddenly to have descended.

Possessed by the enchantment of the candles glimmering in the dusk, the kneeling figures, the solemn faces, irradiated, many of them, by a faith which shone as unmistakably as did the tapers, I retraced my steps. Over this picture was superimposed the curious phantasmagoria of the streets, as one lantern slide might replace another. Again the flowing tide of colour, the blue and pink pulque-shops—now lit by flaring torches—took shape like a picture on a screen, and the solemn scene of the churchyard slipped into the background of memory.

Still the guitars accompanied the high-pitched voices, the roulette wheel revolved,



Night seemed suddenly to have descended.





the persuasive voice urged the crowd to take a hand. Some gambled, some stood aloof and chewed sugar-cane—having perhaps already played; others were lost in argument, having drunk long and deep. Now and again a disconsolate one was led away by the police, his revelry at an end.

Behold the saturnalia of the humble! They will spend their last centavo; they will go to sleep bankrupt. But what matter! To-morrow the sun will shine again; and theirs may be a winning number in the lottery. They have nothing, but it is a cheerful poverty in which they live. They do not seem to know that they are poor.

## CHAPTER IV

### A NIGHT OFF

NOWHERE in the world can one be more forlorn without friends than in a Spanish-American city, and Mexico—great village that it is, is no exception. Not without effort does one sadly adapt oneself to its peculiarities, its paucity of entertainments, its meagreness in all that constitutes city life. My first defeat is still fresh in mind. The day had passed pleasantly enough with the interest of new life and surroundings. Then came the night. Having inquired for the best restaurant in the city, at the reasonable hour of half-past six, I went out to dine. Dining alone is a dismal proceeding at best, but I depended for cheer upon the gaiety of the place, expecting a sort of *Café Martin*.

Entering the patio and ascending the

stairs at the back, I found myself in one of a number of small dining-rooms—all empty. A boy took my hat and presented me with a *boutonnier*. Presently came the head-waiter. To my remark that there were not many people, he replied, with an apologetic cough, that the “world” had not yet come. I said I would have a Manhattan—did he understand? Oh, yes, he knew very well—a *copita* Manhattan. The prospect grew brighter, but speedily darkened when I tasted the drink. I took it gravely as if it were a prescription. There was nothing to mar the solemnity of the occasion.

Would I have dinner served? No. I would wait for the gaiety to begin.

When I had eaten a loaf of bread and all the olives and radishes on the table, the “world” had not yet appeared. Thereupon I forswore it, and ate the excellent dinner in silence and solitude. As I was sipping my coffee, there appeared an old gentleman, his wife, and several maiden ladies, his wife’s relatives perhaps. The head-waiter smiled unctuously, the

party were seated — the “world” had arrived.

Returning to the hotel, I sought my room, resolved to spend a quiet evening at home.

Here, as in Italy, one goes outdoors to get warm and to escape the indoor cold; overcoats are for the house. It is a curious fact that Americans, alone of all people on earth, know how to be thoroughly comfortable; we light our houses and warm them. But even quaint old German stoves, and Tuscan fireplaces, smoking away in the corner of some vast, dim apartment, while the *Tramontana* rattles down the chimney, suggest a degree of comfort as compared with the chilly room that congeals the blood in the City of Mexico.

Somewhere above, in the twilight of the ceiling, a small electric bulb, like a distant nebula, glimmered feebly. While an incandescent light is certainly more modern, as well as more convenient, than the highly respected *bougie* of Continental taverns it is infinitely less companionable. The

candle confines one within a little sphere of soft light in the midst of an outer darkness which the bulb but serves to emphasise. No fire crackled upon the hearth—there was no hearth. Little by little the unearthly cold of those stone walls crept into my bones. I pulled a bed-quilt around me and applied myself in that dim light to the historic pages of the Conquest.

Suddenly an inspiration seized me—why not an oil stove? I called the boy, who in due time appeared, the stove in his embrace. He wore a look of amused wonderment as he deposited the cylinder and retreated. The winter of my discontent neared its end in a genial thaw.

So thinking I applied the fateful match. A murky light appeared and glowered through the little window like a single red eye. Rubbing my hands, I tried to imagine it a crackling log, as I resumed my book.

Then came the revolt of the nose. That evil stove was in eruption, and from its crater the hot and nauseous fumes of coal oil rose and pervaded the room. In de-

spair I extinguished the flame, seized my hat, and went out into the brisk night air.

Learning that the theatres did not open until a quarter before nine, I was directed to the Teatro Principal, as one of the best. Several dragoons were drawn up in the street in front of the entrance, which gave it an air. The posters announced four *sarzueltas* the first entitled *San Juan de Luz*, and I bought a seat for *una tanda*, that is, for one play.

The parquet was anything but gay. Men sat with their hats on, reading the advertisements on the drop curtain, while a subterranean chill communicated itself in place of the tremor of anticipation which we are accustomed to feel before the play begins. From time to time a hollow cough re-echoed through the theatre, and I found myself momentarily expecting some one to lead in prayer, when at length the orchestra began to play, hats came off, and the curtain rose.

This play is perhaps a fair type of the *sarzueta*, or one-act farce, so much affected in Mexico and as popular as vaudeville

with us, but crude and commonplace to a degree. The audience, who know every word by heart, find a familiar and comfortable enjoyment in it. There is no tension ; no one is alert. The oft-repeated lines are to them like cradle songs. From childhood they have gazed upon that barn-storming group, the stage street, the well-beloved beach with its painted waves.

Don Juan is discovered in the boudoir of an estimable lady not his wife. He is evidently away from home and taking a much-needed rest from the omniscient feminine eye, enjoying himself accordingly. The boudoir, which looks chilly and forbidding, suggests the parlour of a Mexican hotel. But Don Juan, superior to mere externals, fairly radiates good nature. The scene, intended to be slightly *risqué*, does not offend so long as you do not understand what is said. Entering into the fun, the audience is with Don Juan heart and soul. He cracks a few of the good old jokes, of the broad and ample proportions characteristic of Spanish humour. The people are delighted.

The second scene presents a street. Mrs. Don Juan appears breathless and with fire in her eye. She is on the trail of her recreant spouse. At sight of her the audience to a man is moved to pity—for Don Juan. In each hand she carries a canvas telescope bag. She is accompanied by a man—a brother, perhaps—who carries the remaining canvas bag and walks on tiptoe. After one look around she delivers an harangue which sears the air, displaying such volubility, such lightning rapidity of utterance as only a Latin can command. Her pronunciation, however, is Castilian, not Mexican. She sinks at last into a kitchen chair, which opportunely stands in the street.

There, gazing into space, the picture of vengeance, she recovers her breath. Presently a man saunters by and is recognised as a friend. The escort flings the bag over his shoulder, to indicate astonishment, and every one slaps every one else on the back. Evidently the new-comer has seen Don Juan, and says something which fills the good lady with righteous indignation, for



she rolls her eyes in a fine frenzy. Tragically, the three depart in search of the culprit.

Behold now the genial man cavorting on the sands, with not one, but several, gay ladies in bathing costumes, *a la* Home Journal. Joy is unconfined. They pirouette upon the wooden beach and prance into the painted sea. Cavaliers stand around and ogle the ladies in pantalettes. The cavaliers are dressed after the peculiar manner of male choruses in the *zarzuela*—dark trousers and snuff-coloured coats, with a decided leaning towards pink cravats.

The fun at its height, the irate wife arrives, still faithful to her canvas bags, which she deposits triumphantly. A scurrying of pink legs ensues, while Don Juan makes for the bath-house, whence presently a pistol-shot is heard. The implacable one is overcome, her anger turned to grief, whereupon Don Juan appears, at the psychological moment—with a hole in his hat—and is forgiven.

As the curtain fell, the audience at once

sought relief in the cigarette and filed out through the narrow passage-way. Those who wore zerapes carefully drew them over their mouths. In the lobby another audience was waiting for the second *zarzuela*. I sauntered back to the hotel, through the quiet and almost deserted streets. Gendarmes stood at their posts, their lanterns in the middle of the road. The door of the hotel was closed and I had to rap with my cane before the sleepy portero let me in. It was half-past ten, and Mexico slumbered.

## CHAPTER V

### A LOTUS-EATER IN CUERNAVACA

AS often as I was thawed by the genial mornings it was to be congealed again by the frosty evenings of Mexico City. At length it was whispered to me that beyond the Ajusco range, which shuts in the Valley of Mexico to the south, lies the Valley of Morelos, even more beautiful, and with a climate unequalled.

It is merely a matter of a few hours to ascend the range to an elevation of ten thousand feet, dropping down on this side into Cuernavaca, which is only five thousand, but the difference is as great as if you had gone many leagues to the south; for in Mexico, in place of going north and south, you move up or down the edge of the plateau with a sort of migratory instinct and change your climate with the altitude.

Nature has no caprices here; there is endless sunshine, an Egyptian climate into which altitude has infused certain refreshing qualities—a rare and satisfying combination. The weather even ceases to serve as a topic for discussion. It is futile to remark that the morning is pleasant—the morning is always perfect. New-comers gradually eliminate this from their conversation, perceiving that there is no excuse for such trite and self-evident assertion.

While tranquillity may be superior to mere externals, the state of mind implied in *dolce far niente* is something not so philosophic, is induced in fact by the hypnosis of environment—a genial hypnosis withal and greatly to be desired. Impossible to some temperaments, to the fertile and imaginative mind it comes as idleness to the shallow and vapid. It cannot be forced, nor is it achieved; you eat of the lotus, that is all, and peace descends upon you.

A restless mind is stony ground for such seed, and the cares of the world tares

which surely choke so delicate a plant. The seed must fall on good ground if it is to thrive and bear fruit—an environment un-American, unprogressive, Latin ; where no one hurries, where to-morrow will answer as well as to-day, if not better, and the atmosphere is charged with a gentle, unobtrusive, contented spirit.

In Cuernavaca one basks not only in the matchless sunshine of Mexico, but in this genial atmosphere—as in a finer, more subtle light—into which no hurry or strenuousness has ever been injected. And if one must wait for one's coffee and be resigned, surely it is a small price to pay.

The key-note of this Mexican life is surrender, as with us it is assertion. There is a certain patio to which I turn, as to some delightful palace of dreams, to relinquish myself to a delicious lethargy. It might be written, "Who enters here leaves the world behind." Only a faint hum penetrates the thick old Spanish walls. As one looks upward, the thoughts naturally ascend to soar with the buzzard in stately and rhythmical flights, descend-

ing again out of that blue vault into the quiet patio where the bougainvillea is massed in brilliant patches on the tiled roof.

My palace is open only to the heavens, the blue square overhead a doorway to the vast and elemental beauty beyond, so that there is no sense of being confined by the massive walls. The eye does not tire of watching the buzzards, the most beautiful flight in nature. Remote specks in the distant blue, they still convey to the mind a distinct suggestion of poise and of the poetry of motion—such small things influence us. Over the tiled roof come filmy clouds to float leisurely across the blue square. It is as if one's subtle fancies were projected and made visible, now in the intense blue, now in the shimmering cloud—fancies which become golden and opalescent with the departing day.

In the centre of the patio, among the flowers, a little fountain falls languidly into a pool as clear as crystal in a ceaseless rippling murmur. All day the water



In the centre of the patio, a little fountain falls languidly into a pool.





dimples and smiles in the sunshine as it hears the song and receives the spray, like a shower of diamonds and rubies. The voice of the fountain animates the patio with its soft and musical accents, while the myriad gems ever gleam and vanish. 'T is the presence of one serene and gentle, as all is tranquil in this palace of dreams.

Here it is easy to surrender. Day by day the world grows more remote, like a vanishing star. There is no news, and much leisure to reflect upon that which is never old. We are lost to the strenuous world—we, the lotus-eaters. There are no longer days of the week, and we give ourselves to the luxury of leisure. Some time afar off—in some past life, perhaps—we also were of the world, were fighters and strivers with the rest. Now we have entered into the Blessed State.

Occasionally there descends upon us out of the Dakotas, or again from the classic confines of Boston, some migratory swarm of tourists, a hundred strong, to awaken haunting memories of that dim

foreworld in which we too once lived. In a compact body, energetic and agog, they move through the quiet old town, coming and going like a swarm of locusts, and we are left once more to our reveries.

In the early morning I sally forth from the patio, and, astride an ambling pony, meander through the by-roads of the town. Under a sombrero, extensive and sheltering as a white umbrella, one sits at ease in the capacious Mexican saddle, while the horse zigzags down the steep sides of a barranca or picks his way along the stony roads, shaded by mango trees, curious tropical-looking mammeys and zapotes. Sunny little patches of banana relieve the dense sombre green of the mangoes, while everywhere in the shade the red berries of the coffee strung along the branches add a bit of colour. Here and there palm mats in the road are covered with berries drying in the sun. Always the ear is refreshed by the sound of running water, gurgling through the streets and crossing the roads on its way to the fields.

There is not far to go in any direction before one emerges from these pleasant shades into a tropical sunlight; but how soft the outlines of the distant mountains, even in the glare of noonday. In the valley the bright green of the sugar-cane is a positive note of colour, but beyond, the bald mountains are all haze and flowing purple.

Out of the soft and luxuriant mantle of blue, Popocatepetl lifts his head above the encircling haze into the transparent air, and "La Mujer Blanca" lies wrapped in her shroud of snow in the majesty of repose. As the eye circles the horizon, it comes to rest upon these snow-peaks as the needle seeks the pole; and turn your back as you may, some irresistible power draws you, till once more, and still again, you face about and gaze at their calm beauty. Popocatepetl is to Mexico what Fuji-Yama is to Japan—a mountain which has seemingly infused its personality into the spirit of the land, brooding over it and dominating it like some protecting spirit. Never does the eye rest upon those sublime

heights but some small measure of peace descends upon the soul.

What innumerable pictures on these never to be forgotten roads: burros lost to view beneath their loads of hay; others laden with pottery, with charcoal, with pigskins of pulque and barrels of spirits. Lo, the poor donkey! Ever toiling, ever patient, he carries the burdens of Mexico on his unresisting back. These are all dream-pictures and naturally fit into the dream-life one leads; so that to leave the cloistered seclusion of the patio, the friendly and musical voice of the little fountain, is not to come into rude contact with any hard world of facts but rather to go forth in sleep, as it were, and to encounter dream-people.

A Mexican cannot fail to be picturesque when he wears his hat. He supports it with an air always, an abandon that is good to see. Let him put on his sombrero and he assumes character with it and is something in the landscape. Dirty?—we have plenty of clean and uninteresting people at home. He is as picturesque in his

way as any Bedouin of the desert, or turbaned Rajput. Where else, save in the wonderful East, would one witness such scenes as these wherewith we daily feed the imagination?

Surely we have eaten of the lotus and have forgotten—and there is so much that is worth forgetting. To have travelled out of the rut, any rut, and to look about a little and rejoice in a new horizon, an interested spectator merely of a quaintly fascinating life—that is lotus-eating. Here it is as if we had dropped down upon Mars for a little vacation; no tax-collectors, no jury summons, no “extras,” no fire-alarms, no telephones—it is paradise.

There is a charm in traditions wholly remote from our own, a glamour which surrounds the ways and customs of other peoples. It is like the purple haze over distant hills, vanishing as we approach, while they resolve themselves into masses of rock, bare and grim. The mountains of Morelos, for the most part brown and barren, are in the distance as mother-of-pearl. Perhaps this Mexican life, like the

mountains, would also look barren seen too near. Yet the ways of these Indians are as different from our own as those of animals. Observe it with what interest and sympathy you may, their life is still as alien to you as you are foreign to it. To some people the peons seem inexpressibly sad; to me they appear as children merely. Their sadness is not conscious but cosmic, like falling leaves and dying worlds.

It is a gentle delight to wander through the crooked narrow streets, as between two walls, refreshed from time to time by marvellous little vistas framed in open doorways—a date-palm, a tiled roof half buried in bougainvillea, a Byzantine dome seen against the purple hills. It may be to find yourself in the Borda garden by the old Moorish fountain; or in front of the ancient cathedral, buttressed and battlemented like a fortress and unspeakably rich in colour; or in the market-place—a counterpart of the Eastern bazaar, and quite as much an institution of the country—with its dark-hued, white-clad



The market-place—a counterpart of the Eastern bazaar.





venders, squatting behind palm-mats, busy haggling over their wares: rich brown and russet tropical fruits, rows of clay pots and jars, coffee berries spread on mats, huge beans, dried beetles, bits of sea-shells and bunches of herbs. Is not the market-place the heart of every pueblo in Mexico? But who shall take the village pulse?

Little excursions into Wonderland these, for which I daily forsake the music of the fountain, and the seclusion of the patio, returning to its pensive shades with fresh pictures and new substance for dreams.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CALLE MATAMOROS

THE Calle Matamoros is but a usual street in a town of the size of Cuernavaca. Its people live in a fashion which doubtless to them is humdrum enough. They are perhaps unacquainted with the word "picturesque," and, if not, would be astonished to know that it applied to them or to their little street. Looking with amused tolerance at the wandering Gringo, they wonder what he can see where they see so little.

The street extends for some half-dozen blocks when—as is customary with Mexican streets—it assumes other names, and becomes on the one hand the Calle San Francisco, and on the other the Calle Colon, ending in the Temisco road, which, like Whitman's "Open Road," leads wherever you please.

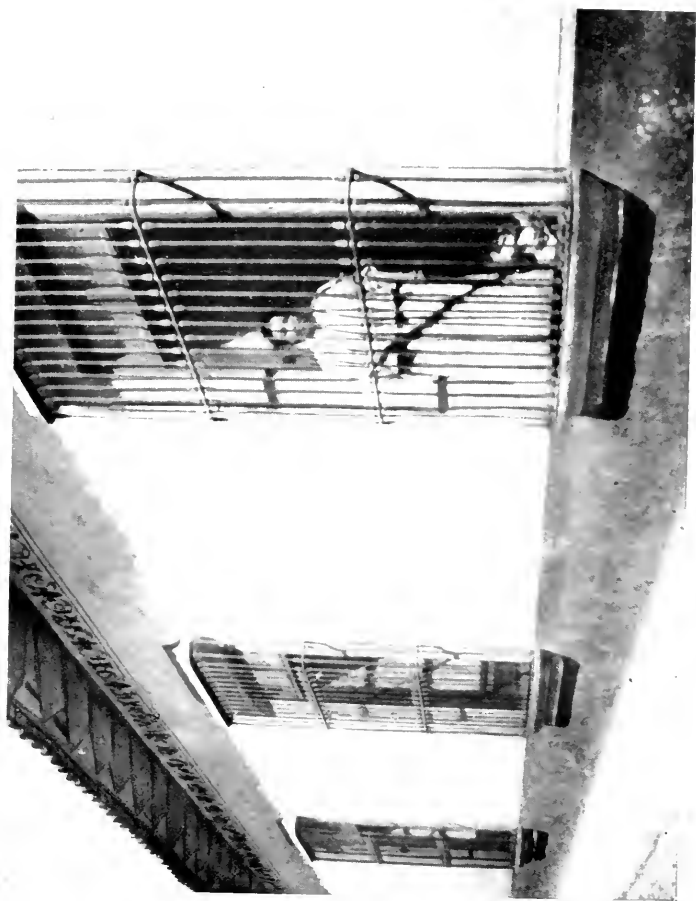
The dwellings which front on it have the true Spanish characteristic of presenting outwardly an uninviting aspect, while within they may be charming. Smooth walls and barred windows guard delightful old patios embowered in flowers. While this custom discloses a certain Spanish exclusiveness, it speaks plainly of the days when a man's house was his castle, which he himself was called upon to defend from brigands and ladrones, and in which he took refuge in the stress of revolution.

There is small danger now of bandits, though they exist. Within a month these gentlemen have sacked two houses in the good old way, one an hacienda in Jalisco, the other a house in the environs of the Capital itself. The barred windows serve, however, to keep out the petty thief, while the plain exteriors foster that spirit in which their owners have been nurtured. Towards evening, the women-folk love to sit in the windows and peer out at the passers-by, at whom they stare quite as curiously and with as little self-conscious-

ness as if they fancied themselves invisible behind those bars.

At nightfall the gendarme takes his stand at the corner, wraps himself in his great coat, pulls the hood over his head, covers his mouth carefully and sets his lantern in the middle of the street. At ten o'clock his melancholy whistle admonishes the already sleeping neighbourhood that all is well, and thenceforward through the night he emits from time to time those pathetic wails, which have in them something eerie and wild and are yet sweet. They disturb the silence like the cry of some passing bird, and from far up the street there come faint answering wails, when instantly the night lapses again into profound stillness. The peculiar whistle conveys to any chance watcher a certain note of well-being and assurance, as much as to say : Sleep in peace—I, the Spirit of the Night, watch over you.

During the day old Sanchez Borrios patrols the street in his linen suit, armed with his huge pistol. He wears always an air of supreme importance which his



Smooth walls and barred windows guard delightful old patios.



linen pea-jacket does little to sustain, while his small figure is far from imposing. Occasionally he may be seen with some stupefied peon in tow, cautiously steering for the *carcel*, but not often is the monotony of his existence broken by even this slight adventure.

When summoned to use his martial powers, however, Don Sanchez shows himself equal to the occasion. A recreant pig appeared one day on his beat, and the law, in the person of Sanchez, seized him by his hind legs and started wheel-barrow fashion for the *carcel*, the pig squealing with terror and much resisting. What! A pig in the Calle Matamoros? Don Sanchez was scandalised. He should be shown forthwith that this was no by-road of Atlacomulco but the Calle Matamoros.

Now the bold seizure was witnessed by Emilio Flores, the boot-black, who indeed sees everything that goes on in the neighbourhood, and as the pig is the property of his father, Emilio scurried away to carry the news. Soon the elder Flores came on

the run to the rescue. Eloquently he pleaded and, the neighbourhood turning out, the merits of the case were openly discussed. At last Sanchez relented in so far as to let go of one leg and listen to the fervent appeal in the prisoner's behalf. The majesty of the law was to be upheld however, and it was only when tired of holding his captive—no easy task, to be sure—that he consented to relinquish him, authority having been vindicated, the populace impressed.

Don Sanchez pulled down his pea-jacket, readjusted his pistol, and resumed his beat.

The Calle Matamoros is the "Main Street" of the town, and one sees over the doors of the shops some good old Spanish names. Francisco Mendoza, of aristocratic name if not lineage, has the only show-window. Here he displays several pieces of cloth, some pairs of yellow congress gaiters with very pointed toes, and a few silk neckerchiefs, pea-green and lemon-yellow. Every day at noon he closes his window with heavy



wooden shutters, and does not open it again until towards evening.

Adjoining the shop of the tailor is one rather larger than the rest and without windows. Over the door swings a blue signboard, bearing the inscription "*Casa de Prestamos.*" This is the government pawn-shop, and it is better patronised than any other store in the street.

Its tiers of shelves are quite full of carefully done-up packages, all ticketed. These neat rolls are rebosos, shirts, zerapes, and the cotton trousers of little boys. A peon will pawn anything he has, even to his machete. There is, for instance, one shelf full of carpenters' tools, saws, hammers, and planes.

If your laundry is not all sent back, you have good cause to suspect the missing portion has been pawned. You have but to wait and it will be returned intact. Last week I could not get my clothes, which I took to mean they were among the neatly rolled packages, duly ticketed. This week I cannot get the laundress herself, which perhaps implies she has pawned

her irons, as I have just seen two in the pawn-shop. While I stood looking in at the door a woman appeared, and taking from a cloth her good man's sombrero exchanged it for a little silver.

One has here an insight into the domestic life; the pawn-shop is a chink through which one peeps surreptitiously into all the village houses. Did I not see a doll, with a scrap of blue cloth wrapped about it by way of reboso, on which was pinned a small ticket? It recalled a little girl whose *muñeca* had a bit of sugar tied to its poor rag hand. Which would the family surrender first—the hat or the doll?

There is not a busier man in the Calle Matamoros than old Benito Gonzales—nor a kindlier one. Morning to night, Sundays and week-days, he is at work in his little shop, pressing an old sombrero or putting new braid on it, and invariably he has a cheerful word.

“You are always working, my friend.”

“One must work in this world, señor,” he replies cheerily. His is no gospel of discontent, evidently.

He sits in the doorway of his shop, there being no windows, industriously plying his needle. When he can no longer see, he lights a solitary candle, and by its flickering ray continues his work. If you should pass his doorway then, you would find him intent upon some antique sombrero with worn silver band, his strong kindly face and his massive head with its shock of grey hair standing out in relief in the darkness of his shop, and you would say, as others have done before, "There is a Rembrandt for you."

A hat-rack, extending the width of the little room and completely covered with sombreros, forms a fitting background to the picture. They are but dimly made out by the light of the single candle, but should you happen that way in the afternoon, when the sun shines in the doorway, you could run your eye over these ancient hats, dust-covered all of them and embellished with cobwebs as well.

I fancy they have histories if one could but learn them. A grey felt, its wide brim entirely covered with tarnished silver

lace and its crown a veritable ruin, is old enough to have seen many changes in Mexico, and a due share of revolutions. By its side is a woolly sombrero of plum-colour, quite as venerable in appearance. The two wear the same look of senile decrepitude, and seem to incline towards each other with mute sympathy, like old cronies. Benito himself remembers well when the *Emperador* was here in Cuernavaca. He was a true gentleman, he says, always giving money to the *pobres* when he went about. But that was only a matter of forty years ago, whereas Benito has lived more than seventy years in this village, and all his life has been a mender of hats. Not a sombrero in the town, of any worth, but sooner or later it comes to him.

So perhaps the old grey and the plum-coloured sombreros were once doffed to Maximilian and Carlotta, for what are two-score years to those who look as though they might easily have seen a hundred?

While Benito is busily plying his needle, Ramon Villacaña sits on the narrow side-

walk, working quite as hard in his way, which is a very different one from Benito's. Ramon is likewise old, and long ago—so long indeed that he has almost forgotten how it was—he lost a foot. From that day to this he has sat with extended stump and outstretched hand, the whining look of the beggar on his grizzled face. Now it is harder work to sit all day long upon the sidewalk and hold out your hand than to busy yourself over some useful occupation, and when night comes the beggar feels that he has earned his few coppers. His face is as weak and irresolute as Benito's is strong and self-contained, and the record of the weary purposeless years is stamped upon his features. When you leave him a centavo his poor fishy eye lights up, and he looks vacantly to the heavens while he invokes a blessing upon you. But this blessing and the wan smile of the beggar are quite worth the cent they cost.

He is usually smoking a cigarette, which he holds under his zerape the moment he sees you approaching. At such times, if

he happens to catch your eye, a sheepish smile flits over his grey old face, instantly suppressed into the suppliant look of the beggar. He cannot recall how many years he has sat there ; it may be twenty, it may be more. Life is all more or less vacant to him ; he sits in a trance, as it were, watching a slender stream of copper coins one by one detaching themselves from well-disposed hands and dribbling into his sombrero, with now and then a gleam of a small piece of silver.

In the morning he sees the sweeper with his broom of twigs brushing the street, and he is there to see the lights appear one by one every night, passing from one vacant dream into another. But it may be—and this softens the heart to the beggar-man—that there crosses his waking dream, now and again, a vision of a day when life did hold some small purpose ; before he lopped off his foot, and with it some part of his mind, and the creeping paralysis of the will chained him to the sidewalk with the hopeless irresolute look on his face.

Fair is the morning in the Calle Matamoros. There are no early mists to dispel; no miasma of the night rests over the town, but the air is as fresh and pure as though it were the summit of Popo itself. The little street glistens all pink in the sunshine, as it has glistened for centuries. From the tiled roofs the cañon wren laughs, his sweet merry laugh, and bobs ceremoniously to the first peon hurrying down at a dog trot from Tlaltanango. His white chin and throat show plainly against the red tiles, and he carries his pert tail at an angle, as do all well-bred wrens the continent over.

Presently comes the sweeper, done up in his zerape and brushing the cobbles as he goes. Ramon, the beggar, hobbling to his accustomed place, succumbs to the hypnosis of the sidewalk and waits for the first copper to disturb his trance. Soon there is the shuffle of many *guarachas* and the hum of voices. The Calle Matamoros is awake. Benito, opening the door, picks up the sombrero he laid down the night before when he blew out the

solitary candle. In a moment he is sewing away again quite as if a night had not intervened. The tailor takes down his shutters and displays his pea-green neckerchiefs and the yellow gaiters with the pointed toes. The water-carrier hurries up the street, carrying water from the fountain, with the never-changing gait of a pack-animal; while from an opposite direction the charcoal man drives his donkey from door to door, his load of charcoal in long slim sacks.

So the village life goes on till noonday, with the hubbub of peons coming down from the mountains to the plaza, and the soft clatter of burros carrying barrels of *aguardiente*. Having wound its way down from Mexico, zigzagging along the slopes of the Ajusco range, the daily train arrives at this hour—if by any chance it is not late—and the mule-car makes its single trip to and from the station. The sharp crack of a whip, the toot of a horn, and the event is over, the street subsides, even the barking of dogs ceases for a time. Up go the shutters



and silence falls upon all—the Calle takes its siesta.

Now for a little while it slumbers in the simmering heat. Old Ramon sinks into a still deeper stupor, knowing that no coppers will fall into his lap at that hour. In the shadows of open doorways are limp and unconscious figures. Don Sanchez dozes in the shade, unmindful of even a recreant pig—but no pig would venture forth at such an unseemly hour. If any man must of necessity go up the street, he scurries along close to the wall, like a field mouse out of its runway, and darts into a side street.

When at length the world arouses itself, the sun is shining on but one side of the Calle. The recumbent figures yawn and stretch, the limp dogs get on their feet, old Ramon drones a blessing as a copper descends into his hat, while the soft clatter of burros recommences.

As the sun sinks behind the western spurs of the Sierra Madre, a sudden perceptible coolness is felt in the air. By the time the light has faded the peons

have drawn their zerapes over their mouths, as is their custom. Little groups stand on the sidewalk, talking and laughing, and the sound of their voices echoes down the narrow trough of the street, but Benito Gonzales lights his candle and patiently continues at work.

All the world is asleep again when there sounds the first melancholy wail of a gendarme's whistle, answered by other wails coming faintly from the distance.

## CHAPTER VII

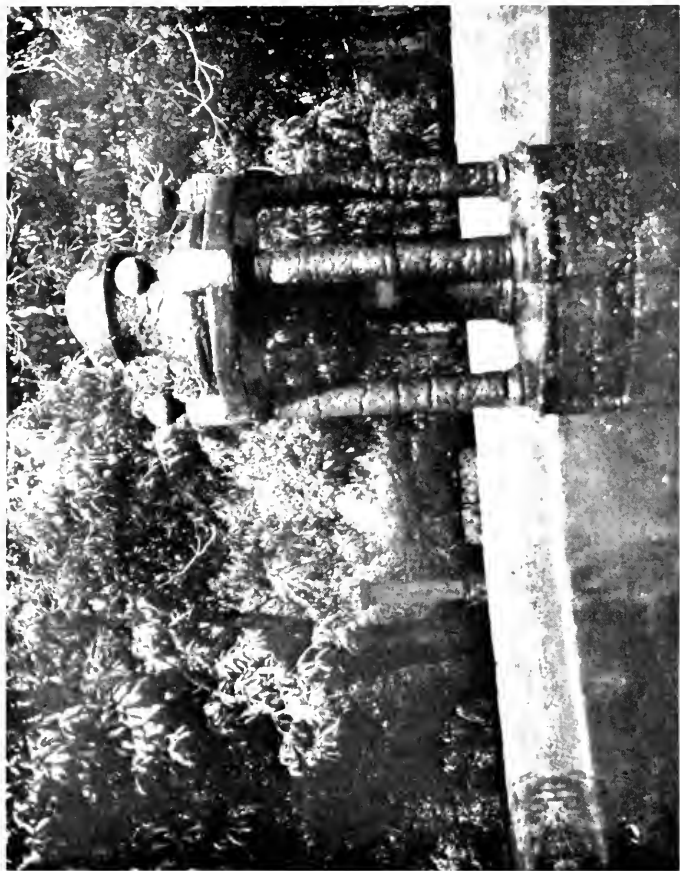
### A GARDEN OF NEW SPAIN

ABOUT an old garden with its subtle intimations, its web of romance, fancy-woven, there is a rare fascination ; while if not neglected it has acquired that charm which is the gift of age alone, that harmony of wall and vine and rose, of the shaded walk and the trees which overhang it. There is a softening of lines, a confusion of identity, an intermingling into bowers. This is particularly true of old gardens in Mexico, which are very different from old French or Italian gardens where there is such evidence of care and the effort to produce effect. Here Time, more than any gardener, is the wonder-worker.

The Borda Garden in Cuernavaca is not of Mexico so much as of New Spain

which was before Mexico. You see its foreign antecedents in the old Moorish fountain which might have been brought from Granada. Half close your eyes and you recall the slender columns and delicate arabesques of some court of the Alhambra, for the shadow of the Moor fell even upon New Spain. What character in these old Spanish walls which are without pretence and precisely what they were meant to be ! They exclude the world as they inclose the garden. In modern Mexico they sometimes outline bars upon a wall to represent an iron fence, as they will paint blue squares upon the façade of a church to imitate blocks of stone. But in New Spain they never did this. Those were days of strength and originality and they builded accordingly.

Such walls might have been intended for a monastery garden, so effectually do they shut in, and once inside you feel a cloistered seclusion ; all the more that through the mangoes there are glimpses of the red dome of Guadalupe. Here you have thoughts that do not occur to



Old Moorish fountain.



you in walking through the town, but which seem to be confined within the high walls, or to descend from the trees. It is a little world of itself, peopled by birds and butterflies, and perhaps by the shades of the departed, as all old gardens are apt to be. Fancy what whisperings there have been here in all the years, while the moonbeams glanced through the dark foliage of the zapotes and danced upon the lake ; what confidences within this garden in the days of New Spain and in all the revolutionary years which followed. The walls, having ears and no tongue, guard many a secret.

One haunting memory they hold, for it was here that Carlotta spent much of her time. There are those who still recall the charm of her presence. She was much alone, and these walks under the mangoes have often known the footsteps of the ill-fated empress. By the Moorish fountain, it may be, and in the mirador which looks toward the everlasting hills, she had her dreams of empire ; and here too, it is whispered, there began to fall upon her

mind those shades of night which were gradually to obscure its light. Whatever may have been her ambitious dreams, and in spite of the gathering shadows, one imagines that here, at least, she must have had some share of peace.

The garden is old, but one thinks of one's youth. May not the perfume of jasmine or of a rose suddenly bring up the vision of a woman? 'T is magic-play thus to conjure a face out of the all-obiterated past, and with it a train of associations and memories, like long-forgotten airs. That is a spell which surely resides in the garden. One might perchance read Omar in such a place—to another—and the thoughts, mellowed by the rare old vintage and bouquet, flow rhythmically and with that metre which is like music.

Should you inquire the history of the garden, it is this: Once upon a time lived José de la Borda, a personage now a little vague and mythical. None the less was he a valiant man; a man with a head on his shoulders. He is reputed to have come from France, so that very likely his



name was de la Borde. It was in the first half of the eighteenth century that he came to New Spain, at a time when the land was essentially for the Spaniard, and for no one else, and the alien was not welcomed to share in its opportunities. But this man with a head on his shoulders—such is the rumour—voyaged to Spain, and, securing certain concessions, returned prepared to do business. At Tasco, a little hill town, remote from railroads to this day, he literally took out millions. One of his millions he put into the church of Tasco, to conciliate the Church, it may be, which was a power in that day and could not well abide seeing silver of New Spain diverted from the ecclesiastical coffers. Another million went into the garden in Cuernavaca, a concession not to the Church this time, but to the luxurious fancy and the pride of Don José himself.

José de la Borda became one of the great plungers of his day. Three separate fortunes he made and lost. It is said that when one had slipped from his fingers he

was permitted to sell the ornaments in the Tasco church, worth several hundred thousand dollars. If this is true, it is the most interesting fact in his career. He had made his peace with the good fathers, and they, it would seem, were ready to back him for a new venture. How or when he died I do not know, but the church at Tasco and the Jardin Borda, which dates from about 1750, serve to keep his memory green.

It was thus the Borda garden came into existence, the mines of Tasco and the brain of José de la Borda being in conjunction. Here he planned, perhaps, some of his ventures, and here he may have brooded over his losses; or it may be he came here for garden-thoughts, poetic fancies, and escape from the world. Since it was he invoked it, he must have come under its spell.

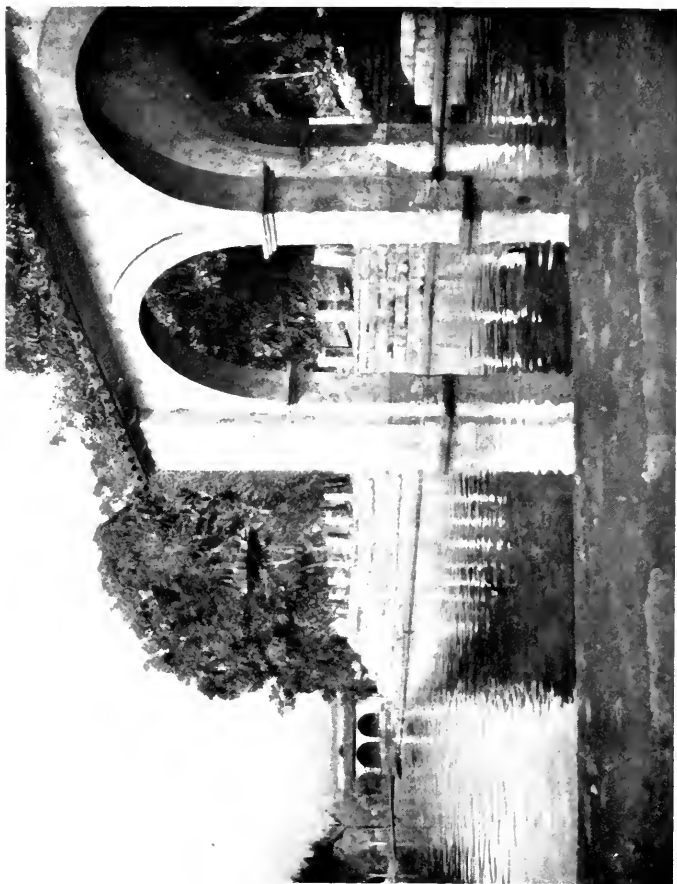
The mangoes are now ripening, and falling, for there is a worm in the bud. They hang on the trees like clusters of hearts, all of bright yellow tinged with red. It is a sunny fruit to look at, as lus-

cious to the eye as an apricot. Beneath, the blossoming coffee is snowed under, as it were, by its own white petals, each twig encased in exquisite white stars. The most effective tree of the garden—a tree of the hot country—is the mammey, with its large fruit projecting directly from the branches like so many excrescences. By its side grows the zapote, another tropical tree, and everywhere are guavas. The gnarled trunk of the zapote is encrusted with parasites, while its fruit so resembles a huge green tomato that one is inclined to think of it as the “tomato tree,” as the aguacate is the tree of salads, since it yields the very best in the world.

The branches hang so low over the walks, and so frequently do the old garden steps interpose, that the eye is pleasantly deceived as to distances. You see but a little of the garden in any single glance, with beyond a balustrade, a fountain, or a pool. Here and there is an oleander, now in full bloom, a glorious mass of colour, and here the pomegranate grows, and climbing white roses run riot.

For its whole length the little lake is terraced with a flight of steps, and at one end are portales, whose stone arches rise from the water and are reflected there. Around this lakelet is a dark mass of tropical trees, and beyond in the distance the Ajusco, all hazy purple. A superb oleander stands at the top of the flight of steps and flaunts her voluptuous beauty—she so young and fair, and they so old, so old.

You may stroll time and again down the long shady walks or along the walls which shut out the world, and meet never a soul. It would seem to have descended to the rose and the pomegranate, this garden of New Spain ; they to bloom here for each other and for the wandering bee, and to lavish their fragrance upon the heedless air. Surely the oleander does not blush unseen, for there lives here a great white butterfly, a vast tropical insect, and all day she floats like a thistle-down, ghost-like in the shadows where the coffee blooms, venturing now and again into the brilliant sunlight to visit the beau-



Stone arches rise from the water and are reflected there.



tiful oleander. Her broad wings expand more than six inches, and are as immaculate as virgin snow, save for some pencillings of black. So buoyant and inconsequent is her flight that she appears merely to float upon the air, as the pearly nautilus upon the sea, wafted hither and thither by the breezes. There are butterflies here of the hue of heliotrope, and others whose tawny wings are striped like the tiger, but the white mariposa is the queen of them all.

So effectually have these walls barred out the world that within their seclusion it is still New Spain. To the oleander and the great white butterfly, it is the same as it was to other oleanders and white butterflies in the eighteenth century.

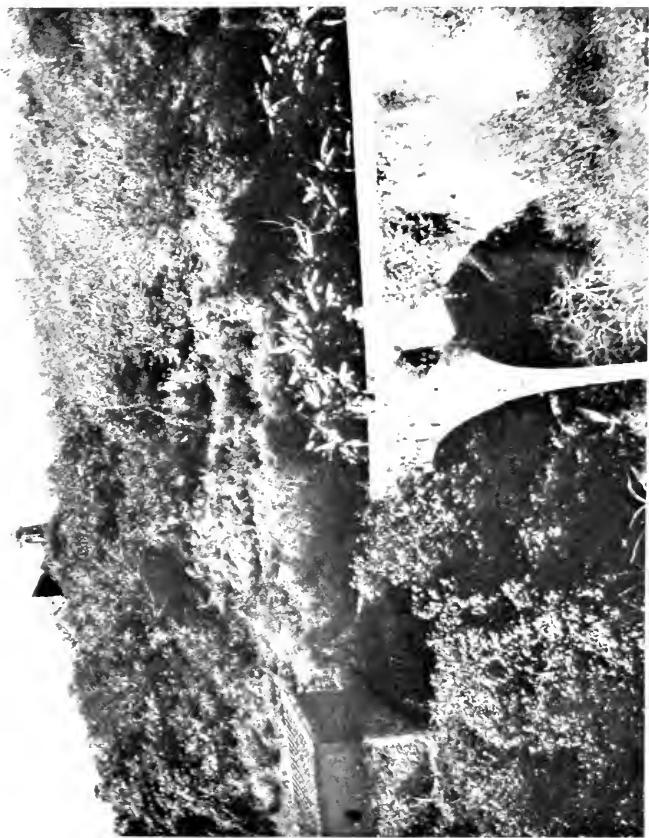
## CHAPTER VIII

### THE POTTERS' VILLAGE

THE gentlest of all excursions from Cuernavaca is across the barranca, over the old bridge with its massive Roman arches, and up the steep winding road to San Antone. Here is a little village given over to the potter and his clay; one of the memorable places, a spot pervaded by the atmosphere of a distinct craft, stamped and characterised by it. It is an ancient calling, invested with the spirit of the past and associated with times and with lands whence came prophets and seers. One is reminded of Persia, of Omar and Saadi and Hafiz, and of Biblical times.

Once in the village there is felt that indefinable charm of the workman and his work. All along the street are signs of this primitive industry, and everywhere the





The old bridge with its massive Roman arches.



work goes on with a quiet persistence, as if hurry were unknown. In the shade of a mango a woman and a young girl are shaping pots and jars. "*Adios*," I say—using the colloquial phrase: "*Con permiso*"—as I enter the gateway, and receive a kindly greeting in return.

The very spirit of gentleness pervades the place. With calm absorption they fondle the pliant clay as if dimly aware of the creative faculty finding expression in their simple art. Insensibly they cast over one the spell of their work; the graceful motions of their brown arms are as hypnotic passes. The girl's face is olive and oval, in striking contrast to the red-brown Indian face of the woman, and her features are delicate and quite regular. As she bends over her task, gently smoothing the wet clay, her absorption gives to her delicate countenance almost an air of consecration. She is shaping a small jar of the classic type, such as Syrian women carry on their shoulders to the wells, adding layer after layer to the rim, as a sea-snail builds its shell; her only tools a scrap of

tin, a horse-hair and a bit of cloth. She uses a bowl as a mould to begin the base of the jar, after which she builds it up with her hands, trusting her eye to complete the curve.

Presently the elder woman begins kneading a batch of clay on a flat stone, much as she would knead dough for tortillas, and her action brings to mind with peculiar vividness the lines of the Rubaiyat :

For I remember stopping by the way  
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay:  
And with its all-obliterated Tongue  
It murmur'd—"Gently, Brother, gently, pray!"

A man is pounding some dry earth with a curious sort of tamp made of a single piece of wood, which he uses, however, in the manner of a sledge. This is the beginning; the inanimate clay protests in hollow thuds which echo along the village street. It is rough treatment which prepares it for the potter. All the inequalities must be beaten out, whereupon it is passed through a piece of sacking, by way of a sieve. The process is severest at first,

growing more and more gentle, till it becomes truly tender as the finishing touches are added and the clay takes its final shape.

They offer me an inverted olla for a seat under the mango, while a man takes a lump of moist clay and flattens it on a stone to a thin layer. His handling grows more and more deft, until finally he barely touches it at all, as he fling a few drops of water on the surface and rapidly skims over it, leaving it even and glistening. As the work nears completion he assumes the attitude of the skilled craftsman, scrutinising it from different points of view, to see if it be true, and constantly smoothing the wet surface. His idea evolves and clothes itself, as it were, with clay, and thus becomes visible. It is delightful to watch the delicate treatment and sensitive touch, as if indeed he were working on a portrait in oils rather than on a mere clay pot.

A group of finished jars lie out in the sun awaiting the firing. They have been painted with some brown paint of home manufacture and probably of vegetable

origin. Near them is a heap of ollas and small jars, battered and cracked and smoke-stained, which have been tried and found wanting. How often indeed has the ancient comparison of the Potter and the Clay served the moralist. These battered pots were once even as the others, but the fire was too severe for them.

Shapes of all sorts and sizes there are. Here is one which might have said :

They sneer at me for leaning all awry;  
What! did the hand then of the Potter shake?

And yonder again one of more slender form might reply :

My Clay with long Oblivion has gone dry;  
But fill me with the old familiar Juice,  
Methinks I might recover by and by.

Preparations are making to bake the pots, all new and unconscious of their impending ordeal. A layer of dried cattle dung is first placed on the ground and the pottery arranged upon this, fuel of the same sort being placed in the interstices and the whole covered with straw. No



In the shade of a mango.





one takes any notice of me, and I overhear scraps of the village talk.

"They are going to bury the *muertito*"—the little dead one—"to-day," says the man softly, polishing his brassero.

"Ay! poor little thing," sighs the woman as she pats the lump of clay.

"To-morrow begins the fiesta of Santa Maria," some one presently remarks.

"Pepe will not go."

"Why?" asks Pepe.

"Because, Pepote, you lost your money at the fiesta of Juitepec."

"Here comes the wind," says another, after a pause, as the breeze springs up which every day as regularly as clock-work blows through the barranca.

All this time one called Guadalupe dances about in and out among the ollas, circling around the oleander and little guava trees. Guadalupe is barefoot and no more than three feet high. She trips over the ground with the abandon of some pretty sprite, while her two little braids fly out behind and her small face is wreathed in mischievous smiles. A born coquette, she

plucks an oleander blossom, and her dance grows more wild and free; never was a more winsome little nut-brown maid. At length a match is applied to the straw, and Guadalupe throws herself breathless on the ground to watch, as there arises a dense volume of white smoke and little flames play over the surface. But the moment I produce the camera from my pocket she scurries away like a chicken before the hawk and hides.

A little way down the street stands the house of the master workman. He it is who models faces upon his jars, and sometimes a lizard in relief, like the salamanders on the fine old bronzes of Mitzuhilo. His work is all of one stamp; all his life he has been making heads of Maximilian, or inlaying eagles with little bits of white crockery, as perhaps his father did before him. He varies the monotony by making small Maximilians and large Maximilians, and each one is a faithful likeness of the last. Every curl of the moustache and the ornate whiskers is stamped upon the workman's brain; he could model those

whiskers in the dark. He has a little wooden potter's wheel, one of the few in the village, which he turns with his great toe while he deftly shapes the clay with his hands, and with such tools as a pointed stick or a piece of tin.

Now and again I have passed his house in the early evening, always to find him still at work out under the trees, with only the light of a sliver of fat pine stuck in a jar or in a pile of dirt. He stoops over the flame, still adding whiskers to Maximilian. The single bending figure, the dark intent face, the little clay image revolving on the potter's wheel, all lit by the ruddy glow of the pine torch and framed in the surrounding darkness—that picture expresses the life of San Antone, the potters' village.

It is almost as primitive and arcadian as was ever life in any age. From one end of the village to the other you may hear the dough whacked on the *metates* as the good housewives make the tortillas for supper, which the family, seated upon the earth, will eat by the light of a pine



serves the child for a plaything which instinctively the youngster begins to mould. Guadalupe—she who is but three feet high—fashioned for me a little brassero no larger than a teacup. When the time comes she will take her place with the rest and make brasseros and ollas without ever having been taught. Learning unconsciously, by imitation, exactly as birds and quadrupeds do, like them they add nothing of themselves. You may see boys scarcely able to walk making little furrows in the dust and leading the water from one to another, just as they have seen their fathers doing in the fields. This is their training.

The village street, green, shady, and overgrown, has some of the charm of a country lane in New England. But in place of old apple-trees and lilacs there are guavas and mangoes, with here and there a bright oleander or hibiscus. One misses the dandelions, but there are plenty of milk-weed and arnica blossoms, from which bees are making honey. At one end lies the cemetery, and the hill above commands a view of the domes and palms

of Cuernavaca and of the volcanoes beyond.

Towards sunset a little procession comes up this road, led by a boy of ten who carries on his head a small coffin. It is the *muertito*—the little dead one—of whom they were speaking at the house where Guadalupe danced. Five little barefoot boys, the youngest scarcely able to toddle, follow after. The mother trudges with another in her arms; the father carries on his head a large basket filled with oleanders. They turn into the cemetery, and from where I sit on the hill I can see them as they cross to a grave in the corner. No priest is with them, and the boy of ten himself puts the coffin in the ground and covers it with earth, while the rest sit around in a circle. This done, the diminutive mound is strewn with oleanders, and within a half-hour the procession is coming back over the hill. The five little boys are now pursuing each other and laughing with glee. The mother and father wish me a cheerful good-night as they pass. O Death, where is thy sting?

On the purple hills the mystery deepens. I hear the dream-song of little crickets, and the parting notes of the cañon wren come like a sweet rippling laugh from an old wall. The girl and the woman are still at work shaping the clay with kindly touch. The red-brown face of the woman is suffused with a ruddy glow, but the face of the girl—the face which is oval and olive—reflects a softer light.

"*Hasta luego, señor,*" they call in their cheery way, "*Hasta luego,*" and their soft voices fall on the air like benedictions.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE ATLACOMULCO ROAD

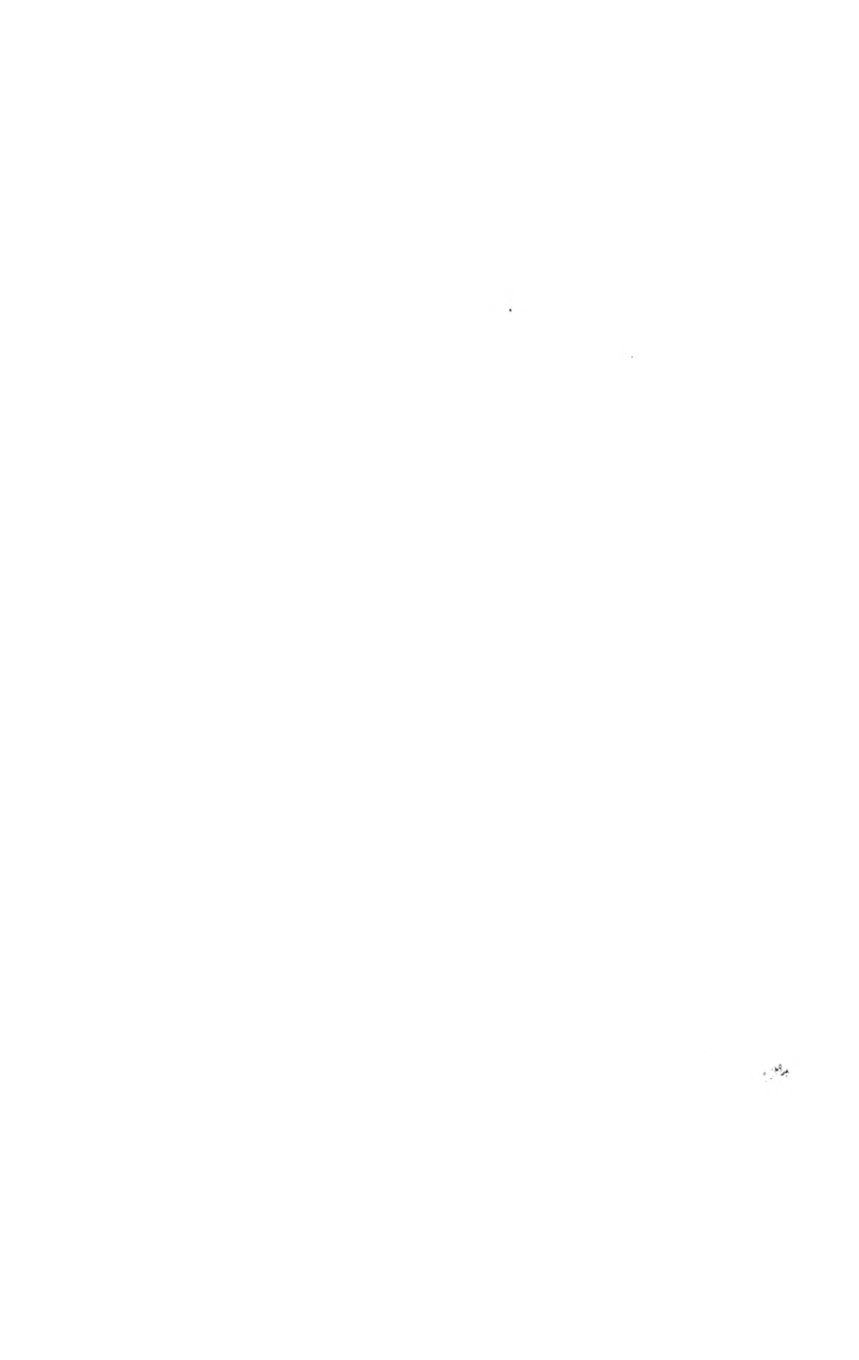
AT the edge of the cane-fields which cover the fertile bottom-lands, lies the hacienda of Atlacomulco. Its massive walls are tinted a rose-pink, which gleams in the sunshine, and the fields fairly glisten, for there is not a brighter green in nature than this hue of the sugar-cane.

Beyond, in the soft distance, rise the mountains tier upon tier, the nearest clothed in sepia and umber. Further away they melt into purple and violet, while the peaks of the remote distance, ethereal and enchanting, dissolve into an exquisite blue, and are perpetually veiled in a transparent opaline mist so impalpable as never to conceal their delicate curves. At times they seem to approach nearer and nearer, and again to recede to





On their backs they carry their jars to market.



the uttermost limits of the horizon, as if merely floating like clouds about to vanish away.

To the east, the cliffs of Tepoztlan rise abruptly from the plain, vast masses of rock, rugged and imposing, and heaped upon themselves, as if some mountainous wave had suddenly been checked in its progress. Above these cliffs, tower the superb outlines of the volcanoes. From the violet shadows of their bases they ascend into a stratum of ethereal blue, to emerge glistening white. No valley in the world has a more beautiful setting than this, where fields like emeralds lie embosomed in mountains of mother-of-pearl. Could I locate anew the Vale of Tempe, it would be here, in a setting such as Greece never knew, where the air itself is like nectar, balmy and soft and laden with the sweet perfume of the huisache.

Over this marvellous scene broods eternal silence. Oxen ploughing in the fields and men and women moving along the road are noiseless as the passing clouds overhead. The sweet call of a cañon wren

or the plaintive cooing of wild doves only intensifies the stillness.

Such is the vision before you as you follow the Atlacomulco road from Cuernavaca to the hacienda, with its rose-pink walls. Nearly four centuries have elapsed since Cortez with his Tlaxcalan allies defeated the Tlahuicas in Cuernavaca, their capital. All these years the descendants of that ancient Indian tribe have trod this highway. Doubtless they have changed but little. They receive some schooling now, to be sure, but if you visit their huts clustered above the hacienda, or at Juitepec, you will see the primitive dwellings and mode of life of antiquity.

As one rides daily through this enchanting valley, wrapped in ineffable silence, the impression grows that in such a land, where nature is at once sublime and infinitely charming, there should have sprung both a literature and a philosophy. One wonders that no Parnassus was discovered here, that no sage meditated in the mountains, no Jeremiah cried in the streets. The valleys of Mexico and Morelos should

seemingly have been the cradle of poets and prophets.

How charmingly pastoral the scene is. This primitive life is so remote from any world of affairs, with its din and confusion, that it sets in motion new ideas. Ambling along the road, the reins thrown over the pommel, you lose yourself in arcadian dreams. In fancy you own a little patch, a yoke of oxen, and a crooked stick, with no cares and no thought beyond these. The sun and the earth are enough. You devour your tortillas and frijoles with a relish. Any bed is soft enough; the song of the wren and the tinkle of the brook which waters your patch of ground the sweetest music.

By the roadside is a solitary cross which marks the scene of a murder. Such are common through the country. Little wooden crosses are stuck up in the fields, and larger, more imposing ones of stone by the wayside. Sometimes skull and bones are carved at the foot. There is no name on this; nothing to indicate for whom it stands, or what manner of death

he died. It is a stern reminder of the days when brigands infested the country and murders were frequent. A lone cross in the silent fields—what a tale it tells! I recall a solemn procession of Indians coming in from Juitepec with a stretcher, on which lay a man covered with a zerape. They carried guns and machetes, as if anticipating trouble; *un herido*, a wounded man, they said. Doubtless many such processions have filed along the highway.

Rarely does any vehicle traverse the old high-road. It is in fact not so much a road as a series of trails and ruts, worn in the lava by countless sandalled feet. These fertile bottom lands were cultivated long before the Conquest, so that some sort of trail must have existed here. No animals traversed it, and the maize was brought all the way on the backs of men, as some is carried to this day. The ruts speak of toil, a toil of which we know little. For a man here may work like a beast of burden and for little more return. He walks by the side of his burro, each with a heavy load, each with the same patient look.



The ruts speak of toil.





On the road one day I encountered Juan. Juan told me he was five years old, but in all probability he is nearer seven, which is not very old, to be sure. He is no larger than the average boy of five, however, and on his back was a load of wood that could not have weighed less than thirty pounds, and may have weighed fifty. It was supported in the usual way, by a band across his forehead and by strips of maguey fibre. We were more than a mile from the town, while he had already come some distance, his body bent over with the weight. He was going to market, he said, to sell his wood for a *medio*. Now a *medio* is equal to three cents in our money, but to Juan, aged five and walking two miles over the rough road with his load, it is worth more than that.

Little Juan has helped to wear these ruts in the high-road. They are eloquent of many Juans, toddling bravely in their diminutive *guarachas*; striding later after the burros laden with loaf sugar from the hacienda, or making the pil-

grimage over the mountain, staff in hand ; tottering feebly at last to the market to chat with old cronies and to beg something to eat. Juan will inscribe the story of his life on these stones. He will wear them down a little, but they, in turn, will wear out his life. When I think of him with his load of wood, it no longer seems arcadian here, and I must look over the fields yonder, and at the mountains veiled in their opaline mist, to discover again the poetic aspects.

Here comes Gabriel Hernandez on his jaded pony, his good wife Luz seated behind him. Luz has a small basket of eggs and some chiramoyas she is taking to market. While she disposes of them Gabriel will probably get drunk, but not so drunk that Luz cannot get him home again, which she will do as a matter of course. He calls her his "cross." It is when he—or she—is in ill-humour that he speaks of her as his *dolor de cabeza*—his headache. I have not learned that she has any pet names for him. One thing may be said for the man, he is kind

to his children ; he loves the *niños*, and is wonderfully gentle with them. That neither parent gives them a bath is not an individual peculiarity, but a racial instinct. To-day Gabriel has on a clean cotton suit, washed by Luz in the ditch in front of their shack, the ditch in which she rinses the few clay pots and dips their drinking-water. I know the house, and I shall pull up there and talk with the children. This being market-day, the villagers are strung out along the road. They come from Juitepec and beyond, little family groups, plodding along together, and neighbours chatting as they walk. Not one but carries something. Old dames, riding sorry nags, bring chickens to market, shortening the way with gossip and tobacco. Market-day is in effect the social affair of the week. Juitepec and Santa Maria meet and smoke together and tell the news.

On such days there is not room in the market-place for all, and the people overflow into the adjoining streets, pile the shady spots with zapotes, and cover the

available space with yams and peanuts. The water-carrier circulates amongst them, bearer of news and of gossip no less than of water. Since he goes to every house, it is he who knows well what everyone is doing and why. If you do not believe it, ask him to have a glass of pulque or two, and you will hear how his tongue can wag. The Atlacomulco road is a stream fed by all the trails from the cane-field, gaining in volume, till at last it pours its tide into the market-place. On market-days there is a freshet and the stream is full to its banks. To know the road, you must sit in the plaza and watch the current flow in, and again you must follow the rough trails between the lava walls of Atlacomulco and Juitepec. Because there are only bare feet and *guarachas* and unshod burros it is almost noiseless. What poised heads there are under baskets! What straight backs—Indian backs—carrying their burdens lightly! As it enters Cuernavaca the stream becomes sluggish because of the steep hill and the pulque shops at the bottom, which are as snags and shallows



Little family groups plodding along together.



and dam the current. The plaza is full of eddies and whirlpools. Each new group enters like a little current, which intermingles with the rest and is lost. Perhaps it is absorbed in the first eddy it meets; or it may thread its devious way across the market and subside on the opposite shore.

Four hundred years have seen no improvement in the road-bed, as they have seen little or none in the manner of living. Where it is roughest, a single trail winds in and out among the loose stones, like the trail of a serpent. Every man follows this as his grandfather did, nor bethinks him to make a new or better path, or even to remove the stones. The people can no more get into a new and better way of living than they can get out of the old ruts in the road. Following the direction of the least resistance, the thoughts of the peon move with his feet in a time-worn channel. What must it be like to have travelled one road all your life, putting your feet day after day, year after year, in the grooves that your remote ancestor

helped to make, and his ancestor before him?

At the side of this road are others equally time-worn and travelled but, strange to say, far smoother and better made, although they are no more than two inches wide. These diminutive highways are built by ants, and, while the villagers are bringing their vegetables over the Atlacomulco road, the equally industrious ants are carrying leaves and flowers over their superior trails. Doubtless the ants had good roads long before the Toltecs came to Mexico. Not a spear of grass is allowed to grow in them and there are apparently no loose pebbles. I have frequently come across remarkable little floral processions here in which millions of ants participate, each one bearing aloft a small yellow flower which resembles a minute golden parasol. At other times the innumerable host have sacked a tree which bears little pink flowers and the long procession of ants will be seen to carry pink umbrellas. Again they convey green leaves which they have cut from the trees. What impresses you most



is that these red ants have so much better roads than the people ; and the more you are jounced over the rough highway the more you reflect upon this. *They* also follow in the footsteps of their ancestors, without change or improvement.

The workers are about the size of our common red ant, but there exist other individuals of enormous size and with immense heads and jaws. On the road one day an old Indian gave me an object lesson in the peculiar use to which these big fellows may be put. Seizing one he allowed it to bite his finger, and when the ant had closed its strong jaws, he thereupon pinched off the thorax, leaving the head and jaws firmly attached to his flesh. This he told me was a good method of sewing up a cut or wound. Several ants are allowed to grasp the cut on either side with their jaws, and when these are firmly set, with their bulldog hold, the body is detached and the cut is closed—a simple method of natural surgery.

I have tried to get my pony to step out of the narrow ruts and essay a new path on

what appears to be better ground, but he is as firmly tied to tradition as the ants or the Indians and will not budge. So along these I plod like any Indian, until we come at length to the home of Gabriel and Luz. The hut is a typical one of the better class in Atlacomulco, with high roof thatched with leaves of the sugar-cane, projecting in front and supported by small columns of mud. It is without windows or chimney. On the lava blocks under the projecting roof, a fire is burning and a pot of beans simmers away. Here I discover the diminutive Juaquina, busily fanning the flame with a small palm-leaf fan, and adding water to the beans.

Juaquina is shy but polite. She shows some enthusiasm when we touch on the subject of beans and admits cheerfully that the family has them every day in the year—"and tortillas, señor." In the course of three score and ten years it will perhaps never occur to her to disparage this sameness. She will have the same fare, as she will travel the same road, and think the same thoughts. Juaquina shows me with



The home of Gabriel and Luz.



some pride a little rag doll to whose shapeless rag hand is tied a piece of brown sugar. Presently she returns to her beans while I look into the house. It consists of one room only and half of this is taken up with corn-stalks kept here for fodder. There is but a dirt floor and, as I have said, no windows, so that the corners of the room are in perpetual dusk and only that space in front of the door is really light. From the ridge-pole the family saddle is suspended when not in use. Juaquina has told me that she, as well as her father and mother, has a horse; but a little cross-examination reveals the fact that, while this is true, they are one and the same beast.

In a corner stands the bed, which, quite as much as the absence of windows, shows the lack of ingenuity or of any sense of comfort: cross-pieces resting upon four conical moulds of clay, such as are used in the hacienda to form the loaf sugar, and upon these a few rough boards.

There is little else in the room—that is to say, in the house—but a pig and a

picture of the Virgin. No Indian hut would be considered furnished without these. House-keeping would appear to be simple under such conditions—no beds to make, no rooms to be dusted, and only a few beans and tortillas to cook. Yet doubtless Martha is even here troubled about many things.

Not far from Gabriel's hut stands the hacienda, perhaps the oldest and certainly the most interesting in the Valley of Morelos. A modern crusher has been introduced, into which, however, the cane is fed by hand. Otherwise the ancient process of making sugar is still in vogue.

Within its ponderous walls the sense of the mediæval, so delightful to the lotus-eater, takes full possession of you. In the high-vaulted interior with its great arches, curious old vats are sunk in the floor, in which the sugar is boiled and from which it runs through stone sluices to the conical moulds of clay. Burros laden with loaf-sugar still file out of the old court-yard as in the early days and follow the Atlacomulco road, side by side with the ants



Within its walls the sense of the mediæval takes possession of one.





carrying their pink and yellow parasols. The hacienda has descended from Cortez through the female branch to the dukes of Monteleone and they, it would seem, have loved the picturesque rather than the practical.

Peons, like gnomes in their subterranean caverns, are carrying cane to the crusher. Some ladle the boiling sugar out of the vats, and these vats are all named. There are San José, San Francisco, and La Magdalena. One calls out that San José is getting cold—this to the man whose business it is to keep him boiling—and forthwith he casts more crushed cane into the furnace and San José froths and sputters. Before being ladled into the moulds the liquid runs into a caldron, and here stands a taster constantly dipping a finger into the simmering sweet as it drips from the stick and conveying the finger to his mouth.

In another part of the hacienda, in dim low-studded corridors, vast numbers of sugar moulds are arranged side by side, resembling the cells of a wasp-nest.

Liquid mud is being poured into these, thus sealing them like the cells of a mud-wasp. It will filter through in fifteen days, they say, and purify the sugar.

“Nothing but earth and water are used, señor ; and we make the best sugar in the valley.”

Be that as it may, there seems to be no further process. It is cool and dim here, as in some old wine vault, too dim unfortunately for the camera, so that one may carry away only a mental picture.

As I return along the highway, still following its time-worn ruts, I am as near as need be to the good old swashbuckling days, which in Mexico took on their own peculiar colour and character. The country has its rapidly developing modern side but this is not the road to it.

## CHAPTER X

### A DANCE AT JUITEPEC

MY road to-day takes me to the village of Juitepec in the cane-fields beyond Atlacomulco. It is the week of the Indian dances, handed down from Aztec times and said to be unchanged except as to costume. Under the great trees in the churchyard dance the villagers, as did their ancestors before them upon the terraces of the teocallis. It is like a faint echo from the Aztec foreworld, that shadowy world, which, like a comet, suddenly came into view, from no one knows where, and gradually receded again.

There is much company on the way, and the journey is enlivened by greetings from soft voices and scattered bits of conversation.

"That's a fine boy you have."

"*Si—si*,"—with a pleased smile and a glance at the big-eyed baby peering out from the reboso.

"A good burro that—no?"

"Aye—so, so. But he is lazy enough."

"He will do better if you feed him."

What a fascinating bit of life it is! What delight to merge yourself in this long Indian file—to be a part of it—while you survey it all from the vantage of centuries. Imagine the dark half-Oriental face of a woman, the two long black braids, the crude silver ear-rings wrought by hand, the white chemise, the skirt of striped homespun—blue and white; imagine hundreds of them patiently plodding, chatting as they walk. These are from the villages—the *pueblitos*; primitive folk are they—Indian from head to foot.

The Cuernavacans are less aboriginal in appearance and show the effect of town life. Like the rest, however, they are trudging cheerfully the eight or ten miles of rough trail. More than one carries in her hand a brand-new pair of yellow congress gaiters, evidently to be donned on

arrival, in honour of the fiesta, while of stockings she is innocent.

Altogether festive is the little plaza in front of the church. Booths have been erected in every available spot—a mushroom growth of the hour. These booths are of cane with a mat for a roof, and set forth, some eatables, some candles, but the greater number that wherewith to wet the throat—pulque, tequilla, and beautiful unknown drinks of red and yellow. Wayside fondas have appeared in a night, where ancient crones, like witches, preside over huge caldrons of frijoles simmering on glowing brasseros.

There are the usual gambling games, well patronised, and much trade in hats, baskets, rebosos, and pottery. Not all the venders are natives of Juitepec, but many are from surrounding villages. The fiesta in Mexico is the legitimate offspring of the Aztec fair, and quite as much a matter of barter as of religion. So now there be many who will sell a hen, later to bargain for a sombrero, presently to go upon their knees within the church yonder, candle in

hand ; lastly to lie by the roadside, overfull of pulque and oblivious of this world or the next.

Already the dances are in progress, and the entrance to the churchyard is occupied by the halt and the blind—a matter of business with them as well. Shall not the beggar have his share of trade? Now is the harvest. So do they importune, with the venders of tortillas and of dulces, and their droning, colourless voices resound above the rest.

Under the great trees, which for so long have been a witness of these things, the crowd is watching. Now there is scarcely beginning or end to an Aztec dance. It consists of repetitions of some simple figure, danced to the music of an Indian harp, a guitar, and fiddle ; and this accompaniment, as well, is but the ceaseless recurrence of a simple rhythmic phrase.

One figure is remarkable for its quaintness : boys and girls in a ring slowly and rhythmically circle round to the quaint, weird strains of harp and guitars. These children dance in a stately way and with

immense gravity, as if for the moment some Aztec pomp did indeed possess them. They move with a peculiar little step and in perfect time, which is never for a moment lost, now weaving their way in and out, now solemnly winding round and round.

Some suggestion of the Aztec costume remains in the embroidered bands which the boys wear about the head, with long plumes inserted in the back and falling forward, in the predominance of green—the royal Aztec colour—and perhaps in the peculiar head-dress of the girls. The boys wear over their usual white cotton suits a little coat of green or purple and a short skirt of rose-colour or other shade, while the girls have embroidered capes of different hues. But they have laid aside their sandals and are made ridiculous by long pantalettes and antique congress gaiters.

Other dances there are, but none so attractive as this. A group of girls dance ceaselessly about a lone youth, who wears a gilt crown and capers among them with

a ludicrous hobble-de-hoy step. Still another group of men in fantastic garb enact a sort of comedy, which includes a sword dance and suggests a lot of schoolboys in paper caps playing soldiers. There is an absurd solemnity about the whole performance, considering its grotesqueness, and it is plain these poor Indians are clinging to some rite whose significance they have forgotten. Meanwhile mass is being celebrated within and the little church is full to overflowing.

The village lanes, with their lava walls and flaming tulipans, afford pleasing vistas and entice one away from the churchyard out into the emerald cane-fields. Later in the day the youth with the gilt crown still capers among the maidens in pantalettes and congress gaiters, and the little boys and girls continue their stately rhythmic measure.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE PILGRIMAGE

THERE is now in progress the annual pilgrimage to Chalma, which lies in the fastness of the Ajusco, some thirty miles from Cuernavaca. Of all the pictures which here gently draw one out of oneself, this is perhaps the most clearly defined. Guadalupe, Cholula, Ameca, Chalma are so many little Meccas, regarded with deepest reverence and seen through mists of tradition. While Chalma is of only local importance, the Indians come in great numbers from all over the valley and even from as far as Puebla.

The pilgrimage—a truly Oriental institution—is well ingrained in Mexican as it was in Aztec life, and has ever been in the East. Peons of this valley trudge to Chalma as the Hindus go to Benares,

and as their heart-eating ancestors long ago went to Cholula. To them the annual pilgrimage is more important than election day with us, and more a part of their life as a people. Chalma is but a little shrine in the hills, which for untold years has drawn the simple people, superstitions of the old faith no doubt mingling with the new.

At dawn I am awakened by the tread of bare or sandalled feet ceaselessly passing the barred windows, and by the soft voices of women and children, with now and again the guttural ejaculation of "Burro! burro!" as some man expostulates with a wayward beast. All carry lanterns and are wrapped to their eyes in zerapes and rebosos. As one crawls out of bed to peep at the long line of flickering lights and the dim figures striding through the sleeping village, it is as if one had surprised some ghostly ceremony of the night. From this hour on the barefooted host moves forward without pause, resting only in the heat of the day. So great faith still lives in Mexico.

Almost every woman has a baby on her back slung in a reboso, its small, patient face peering curiously out at the world, or its head dangling limply as it sleeps. On her head she may carry a basket or tray; on her back a bundle, in addition to the baby. Always she has a staff in hand and a water-gourd slung over her bare shoulder. Her shining black hair hangs in two long braids. Her costume is a sleeveless cotton chemise and a bright-coloured striped cloth worn as a short skirt. In the heat of the day she may fold her blue reboso on top of her head, allowing one end to hang down her back.

Men and women, carrying heavy baskets on their bowed backs, trudge painfully like beasts of burden. Young girls balance smaller baskets on their heads, walking erect with elastic step. Where the family is large a burro carries their belongings, and now and then a woman, more fortunate than the rest, rides some sorry Rosinante, or even two are seated upon the same poor beast, mothers nursing their infants as they go. They sit be-

tween the two panniers, their bare feet dangling on the little beast's neck, and often a wee brown boy holding on behind.

Along the highway the red zerapes and white cotton suits of the men can be seen from afar, and their sombreros resemble so many vast and glistening mushrooms. Imagine this throng strung out on the road for miles, the files of pedestrians gracefully balancing their baskets, the strings of burros, the long line of scarlet and blue and white moving sinuously over the plain in the dazzling sunlight.

Once I followed into the mountains, but was warned to keep away lest I should fall among thieves. There is a section of the Ajusco, through which the pilgrims pass, of ill-repute, like the country the Galileans traversed on their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. As the road ascends it grows incredibly rough, suggesting the dry bed of a mountain torrent; here a heap of loose stones and there sharp ridges of solid lava. Up this steep incline the pilgrims scramble and stumble, alternately pushing and dragging their

burros, the unhappy infants jouncing in their rebosos, and the dogs following behind with protruding tongues.

At night some pilgrims camp by the road, wrapped in zerapes, while others take themselves to the *mesones*, which resemble the caravanseries of Syria and Arabia. Here they stall their beasts, while they themselves may sleep in the enclosure. Rooms may be had, but few can afford them. Under just such conditions the Holy Family travelled to Jerusalem.

So these women, barefoot and with baby slung in their rebosos, trudge some hundred miles—long and tedious miles—sustained on the road by what traditions of the pilgrimage, and by what religious zeal, who can say? Many young children follow their mothers, going with the family as do the dogs. They see other children and the dogs fight with other dogs. It is an event.

The peon world is on the road, the long brown road that leads from one market-place to another. In these market-places

it will hear the gossip of the villages. News travels fast in primitive countries; the Spaniards were amazed at the way the Aztecs informed themselves. A fast and tireless walker, the Indian doubtless carries tidings as the runners did in ancient times for his Aztec forefathers. Of newspapers he knows no more than of telegrams, but the thirst for "news" takes him to the market. In revolutionary times much information must have been disseminated in this way. But, unlike the Oriental, the Mexican is not an intriguer. He is a child, and it is the gossip of the village rather than national affairs which concerns him.

There is a commercial side to these pilgrimages, as to all fiestas. If the peon has anything to sell, one plaza or another will be a good place to dispose of it. If there is a rooster to spare, Pedro corrals him in the shack, where he is as much at home as any one, ties his legs, and dangles him from the pommel all the weary march. Is he a fighting cock? Ah, that is different. Pedro carries him in his

arms as if he were a child, or suspends him in a battered sombrero, his head protruding from a hole in the crown.

With the pilgrims, journey those who feed the multitude, and at every halting-place make tortillas for such as have no women folks to cook for them, setting up a brassero and establishing a fonda by the roadside, where may be had frijoles and *chile con carne*. Naturally a man takes his calling with him if he has any. Does he make *guarachas*?—there will be customers; or sell dulces?—there are plenty of children, and he can surely turn a penny. Then there are the mixers of drinks, red, yellow, and green, of unknown ingredients and served lukewarm to thirsty pilgrims at a centavo a glass.

Thus is the pilgrimage a sort of caravan as well, bringing no ivory and spice, but buying and selling in its small way—the beginnings of commerce and reciprocity. There will go up to Chalma, fruits from the warm Valley of Morelos and from Cuautla way, and there will come down from Chalma, countless rosaries, little

medals, and like commodities ; and there will be great trade in candles. At the candle booths they await the army of pilgrims, as these many years they have awaited it, knowing well that it is a host of purchasers, for the demand never falls off—candles to be burned in dim interiors for the repose of the restless dead.

Plodding slowly, apart from the rest, are now and again aged persons, whose withered features are as dried apples, and who drag their weary feet over the road, leaning heavily on their staffs, and making, perhaps, their last earthly pilgrimage.

In Chalma there will be much going upon knees, candle in hand, many muttered *aves*, and a humbling to the earth of those who are already the lowliest of the lowly. Greatly will they beseech the saints—and there will be some pulque taken. Perhaps there will be a lifting of the heart to better things in that atmosphere of general devotion, where the poor—the unconscious poor—are gathered together.



## CHAPTER XII

### TEPOZTLAN AND XOCHICALCO

“GRINGO ” was brought to my door before daybreak, and I mounted and rode away by the light of the stars. I had ordered a good horse, with an easy gait, to take me to the ruins of Tepoztlan, but found myself astride a beast built on the Navajo plan, with the gait and disposition of an alligator—deliberate, sullen, and full of malice. At a snail’s pace we crept along the Calle Morelos in the darkness, avoiding the occasional lanterns of the gendarmes and assailed by pariah dogs.

Nothing could have exceeded the beauty of the morning. Above the violet cliffs of Tepoztlan the volcanoes loomed like pale ghosts, till the rising sun gradually suffused them in rose-colour. Like an un-

inhabited world, the earth lay enshrouded in silence. At this hour a feeling of isolation possesses one, as if wandering in the mysterious dawn on some new planet. Presently I began to meet the charcoal men coming down from the mountains, their zerapes wrapped tightly about them, their slim sacks of charcoal on their backs.

The sun was already very hot when we reached the village of Santa Catarina, and tying Gringo to a guava tree I sat down in the shade ; suddenly he reared, jerked back until he had torn off the bridle, and before I realised what had happened was galloping down the trail towards his adobe home.

There was nothing to do but call upon San Antonio, friend of the people and restorer of the lost. As it happened, an approaching vaquero intercepted Gringo, lassoed him, and brought him back, crest-fallen but with wrath in his eyes.

An hour later we entered Tepoztlan, which lies at the foot of the cliffs. From the village you may see the lonely teocalli upon their summit, perhaps a thousand feet above.

Gringo was left at the hut of an Indian named Innocencio, who, seated upon the dirt floor by a pile of corn, was scraping the cobs on a *metate*. The pig, some hens, and several pariah dogs kept him company. Taking down his old muzzle-loader and powder-horn, Innocencio volunteered to accompany me, and we struck out through the bananas till we came to the trail in a ravine between perpendicular walls. Never had ruins more romantic setting. As the trail winds up through narrow defiles, the sheer walls are covered with cacti. Innumerable small plants of the pincushion variety, all in flower, cluster thickly on the cliffs, where they resemble sea-anemones at the bottom of some cavern of the ocean. This is not an orchid country, but a few species festoon the trees, which are also covered with honeysuckle and mistletoe. Many trees and shrubs bear brilliant-hued blossoms, scarlet and yellow. The *nochebuena* flower, which with us is known as the poinsettia, is seen here, and the *ageratum* grows wild. Common families of plants abound—composite, mint, spider-

wort, and milkweed, and, though the climate is rather dry for ferns, maiden-hair and spleen-worts adorn the ravines.

Brilliant vermilion flycatchers gleamed like rubies in the sky. Like our Maryland yellowthroats, they have the charming habit of rising high in air, singing as they flutter on outstretched wings, and then darting to the earth. This is the only flycatcher I have heard—unless it be the wood-pewee—that has a really sweet voice, the more remarkable as he has such bright plumage. In one ravine a pair of black hawks were nesting. Cañon wrens crept in and out the crannies of the rock and clarins were singing in the woods their loud sweet jingle. I caught a glimpse of a stealthy rufous cuckoo—the giant of his race—and of a green motmot, swinging his denuded tail like a pendulum. Little flocks of Bullock's and Scott's orioles passed overhead or paused briefly to rest in the trees, their orange and black livery as brilliant as tropic blossoms. Western blue-grossbeaks also came in flocks, the males in splendid plumage. Several of



Every field is enclosed by walls of lava.



our migratory birds were in evidence; among them the blue-gray gnatcatcher, whose song I heard for the first time. There were also Wilson's warbler, the black and white creeper and the ruby-crowned kinglet—birds which, passing through the Northern States late in autumn, seem at home in the wilds of Mexico.

Scaling these cliffs in the fierce noonday heat is no easy work. My diminishing interest in ruins had ceased long before the summit was reached. At last I sank down on the steps of the temple, thinking of the luxurious life I had led before I became an archæologist, while I took from my pocket a flask of lukewarm water and two hard-boiled eggs.

The village of Tepoztlan lies directly beneath in a little trough or valley, between two series of great cliffs. At some period the country was apparently covered by showers of stones from the near-by volcanoes and every field is enclosed by walls of lava. A vast church, out of all proportion to the size of the village, dominates the little valley. I have not seen

in any town in Mexico one more striking from a distance. Built in the formidable fortress style of the cathedral of Cuernavaca, in that isolated spot it stands triumphant, while the vastly more ancient teocalli upon the cliffs wanes with the centuries. These two significant monuments astonish one in a place so wild it would delight the heart of a brigand.

How little did they foresee, who sculptured these designs upon the inner walls, that there would one day be erected, near by, a temple of a religion and a race absolutely unknown to them, and that their descendants should forsake their own for the alien shrine and the new God. Growing out of the ancient steps was a tuft of everlasting, as if emblematic of the imperishable Idea of Religion, which forever remains undimmed, while the form fades away and the temple crumbles to dust. How, indeed, are the mighty fallen !

The teocalli is built in the terraced pyramidal form, massive in appearance, with steps at an angle of forty-five degrees and not wide enough to accommodate the



foot. Standing within, its significance comes over one like a sudden vision of the prehistoric past. Here stood the priest of those ancient rites—a terrible Druid, blood-thirsty and fanatical. On this very spot he invoked Huitzilopochtli and Quetzalcoatl—now in the museum where they belong. Here he offered human sacrifice to the gods of unpronounceable names, with his own hands tearing the heart from the body of his victim.

In the church below, on San Antonio's day, the priest now blesses the dogs, pigs, sheep, and hens all dyed a beautiful pink and spangled with little stars for the occasion, a much more cheerful and picturesque custom.

On the interior walls of the teocalli is one figure which seems to represent some prehistoric beast—perhaps a domestic animal in that day—while the geometric designs suggest those seen in Hindu work before the advent of the Moguls. Sitting upon the steps, Innocencio discussed the ruins with an Indian who had a hut on the cliffs. They used the dialect known as

Azteco, which when spoken rapidly has the singsong cadence of Chinese, and seemed particularly interested in the Megalonyx. It is strange to hear these men talking in the language of their ancestors, while of that people and their religion they can have but vague traditions.

As night came on, the Indian offered me his hut, or *jakalito*, but after one look within, I decided to sleep under the stars. The best place seemed to be the floor of the teocalli itself. Innocencio thought it was not good to sleep in the open because the buzzards might pick out a man's eyes. One can imagine no more impressive spectacle than the descent of night upon these cliffs, with their deep and narrow defiles. Fantastic pinnacles and buttes tower in the air, and upon these the light softened and faded till they were left grim and formidable in the dusk. The forest of the Ajusco was enveloped in mystery, while the village of Tepoztlan gradually receded from view, until, where it had been, there remained an abyss. When the straggling lights of the village



Here stood the priest of those ancient rites.



appeared, they seemed to float in mid-air far below in the depths of the vast pit, while over the Valley of Morelos the evening star hung like a great lamp, its light not of this world, but a pure unearthly radiance.

Rolled in my blankets I lay down on the stone floor of the *teocalli*. An invisible owl circled round and round the cliffs, his unearthly hoot like a disembodied voice. With the Aztecs the owl was the symbol of the Evil Spirit. This one was perhaps the surviving priest of the temple, his plaint an Aztec chant. Low walls enclosed me on three sides, while on the fourth the bottomless pit fell away from the steps of the *teocalli*. It was the apotheosis of Solitude.

Awaking at dawn, so marvellous was the vision of the Valley of Morelos at that hour, that the sense of chill and discomfort gave place to one bordering on ecstasy. Far down in the ravine a clarin was singing—a voice as gay as the hoot of the owl had been dismal.

Early in the afternoon we started down

the trail for Tepoztlan. On the way the shade tempted me to a siesta on the rocky ground—a softer bed than the floor of the teocalli had been. Ten years ago, riding alone through the country, I should have been held up in Santa Catarina, and again in Tepoztlan, and a nap in the woods would have been foolhardy. Now, only the ants disturbed me.

When the railroad was built through this State, only nine years since, the natives used to put stones on the track to see what would happen. The habit was cured by the Rurales. In no country on earth is the course of justice less impeded by sentiment. There are no flowers for the murderer; no girls gush over him; he is probably not tried by his peers—he is shot. This procedure tends to purify the community, and is perhaps best adapted to Mexico. Certainly it has worked wonders in the space of a few years. Were it not for the lack of sentiment in the administration of the law, Innocencio might have relieved me of my watch and clothes.

When I reached the village, Gringo was still brooding over his troubles. Tactfully the bridle was adjusted, the saddle was thrown on him, and we started back over the trail.

. . . . .

The ruin of Xochicalco lies in the opposite direction, and at about an equal distance from Cuernavaca. The road leads towards the lovely Vale of Tempe and its ever elusive mountains, which, on your approach, seem to recede as the opaline mantle lifts itself from the foreground and falls upon remote chains and peaks.

After leaving the hacienda of Temisco, the trail winds over a desolate stretch of country where nothing grows but the prickly pear. Despite the heat of the sun, the air is exhilarating, and those ethereal mountain chains ever beckon you on. Eventually not a habitation is to be seen, not a human being, only the everlasting hills, wrapped in a silence which has never been broken. At the barren

little village of Teclama, the only one on the trail, I stopped for a *quartillo* of corn for the horse. It was to be obtained at one hut only, for which reason they asked nine centavos, in place of the customary six.

Towards mid-day I reached the cerro on whose summit stands the ruin of the teocalli. It is not to be seen till the top is gained and you come suddenly upon it, when it is as if you had discovered a bit of Egypt or ancient Assyria in that eternal solitude. In such a spot it might well have been erected to the God of Silence. Constructed of immense blocks of cut stone, the entire exterior was evidently covered with the most bold and elaborate carving—large figures of men and animals, huge scrolls, and various designs. One of these is a hand grasping a bunch of arrows; but what is most interesting is the figure of a man in the characteristic pose of the Buddha. Another carving shows an instrument resembling that used by mahuts in India to prod their elephants, an implement not like any other.





Ruin of the Teocalli of Xochicalco.



The position of the teocalli, totally unlike that of Tepoztlan, lacks, of course, the wild and romantic aspect of the cliffs. But the temple itself was vastly superior. It is a ruin of the first magnitude, worthy to be classed with the best work of antiquity. Who built it, indeed? Were they Aztec or Toltec, or a people who will ever remain to us nameless and unknown, with only these crumbling stones to record their existence upon the earth? They also were of few days and full of trouble.

On that burning hill-top the only shade was a little strip, a foot wide, on the north side of the ruin. I flattened myself against the wall, and here I was joined by the guardian of the ruin, one Herculano, who said he was a direct descendant of the Aztecs themselves. He brought with him a little book of English conversation, from which he read to show how he was learning English. He spoke Azteco and Spanish, he told me, and wished to acquire English that he might sing hymns to Maria Santissima in three languages. He sang

for me, with a singsong cadence, a chant in Aztec which seemed in harmony with the temple.

While he chanted, my eye, roaming over the immediate hieroglyphics, lit on a serpent coiled in a chink in the stone, and as motionless as the rock itself. Of venerable aspect, he was perhaps himself the rightful guardian of the teocalli, as was the owl of Tepoztlan. He seemed to accord with the place and to belong to it, or it to him.

Herculano returns at night to the village of Teclama, there being neither water nor food to be had nearer, and thus the teocalli is left to the serpent, the symbol of the great god Quetzalcoatl—to whom, perhaps, it was erected.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A LITTLE JOURNEY IN MORELOS

WHEN again I set out in the mysterious dawn, I took pains to select my horse. He was a rugged little beast, with a steady fox-trot, such as the ranchman likes when he is riding the fence. I was careful also to wear spurs, for the Mexican horse is bred to them and does not respond readily to voice or whip. He proved a good traveller, sure-footed and with a sensitive mouth, which is no small consideration.

There is a fine sense of exhilaration in starting out thus for parts unknown. The world lies before you and you abandon yourself to nomadic instincts and the freedom of the open road. As you swing along easily in the dawn, you have a delightful sense of escaping from something. Your equipment is a gun and a

tooth-brush; you abjure polite society and espouse the bandana.

About this Mexican country there is a desolate grandeur, something irredeemable and untamable. It matches its barbarity with your own; it calls out the wild and free and speaks to the suppressed in you; to that which the life of polite trifling has for so long dwarfed and obscured. You acquire the "Mexican habit" which is a kind of lotus-eating. You understand why people return year after year, how eventually they are absorbed by it. The mind is fitted to distance, to large perspectives, to a remote horizon. Green canefields of the bottom lands accentuate the grim aspect of mountains and cliffs, so dominant, forceful and rugged. Stern and unbending nopals and organos replace the soft outlines of maple and birch. As if to atone for this severity, the land is enveloped in light, softer and more yielding than elsewhere, and charged with more delicate gradations of colour. It is desolate, but it is a beautiful desolation; it is sad, but you love it for its sadness.

The corn was up six inches, where a few weeks before they had been ploughing. In the fields the cane was partly cut. Oxen were peacefully browsing by the roadside, the anis feeding within a few inches of their mouths, after the manner of our cow-birds. Presently we left the cane-fields of Atlacomulco and entered the *pedragal*—a river of lava which, flowing down from the Ajusco, cooled so quickly that the waves and the rapids retained their form as they became stone. This lava bed is as rough as a file and will wear the hoofs off a horse or the shoes off one's feet. Over it grows an interminable jungle of nopal, maguey, organos, and low shrubs and creepers which have somehow found a foothold. The rock is honey-combed with cavities, many of them containing the bones of animals.

On the edge of the pedragal lies the Indian village of Tejalpa—a place of lava, of cane huts and guaje trees. The people speak Azteco, and many of them shake their heads if you address them in Spanish. A mile beyond the town runs a clear

stream. Thither flocks the entire village with water-jars ; thither have they always gone, never having bethought them to bring the water to their doors. From Tejalpa, the trail crosses a low range of hills, and, descending the other side, it is as if you had come upon one of the South Sea Islands, for the entire slope is covered with vast numbers of palms, while on the Tejalpa side not one is to be seen. This palm, known by the Indians as the *te-tilla*, is used by them for many purposes.

At eleven o'clock I rode into Yuatepec, beguiled on the way by a blue grosbeak, which led me over the fields like a will-o'-the-wisp. Yuatepec was asleep. The guard slumbered in front of the *carcel*; the people dozed in the market, the dogs in the road. The small stream that flows through the town also slumbered. A more somnolent place I have never seen ; its lethargy might have lasted a hundred years. I found the hotel—or rather the horse did—and woke up mine host, who came blinking out into the little stone patio and took the bridle ; but I saw that



the animal had corn and grass, for unless you yourself attend to this in Mexican villages, your beast may not even get water. They will give him a half ration of corn, turning the hens in to help him eat it; or, they will forget him altogether.

This done, I repaired to a little room wherein two men, having the general air of bandits, sat at an exceedingly dirty table. As they never so much as looked at me, we finished the meal in silence—cabbage soup, eggs *al rancho*, and frijoles. When I came to settle, I found that my horse had had six cents' worth of corn and two of water.

From Yuatepec to Cuautla the road leads through great cane-fields, and I met hundreds of two-wheeled carts drawing cane to the haciendas, pulled by four mules abreast, driven on the run. It is a rich country hereabouts, and the haciendas are fine old feudal establishments, each a village in itself, church and all. You are in Old Mexico or, rather, New Spain, which produced one of the most characteristic architectures to be found in any

country, massive and enduring. What has become of the power, the simplicity, and strength of mind which builded thus?

Cuautla appeared to recede as I approached. The peon has no idea of distance and very little of direction.

"It is about two leagues," one says. An hour or so later another says it is two leagues and a half.

At five o'clock we overtook the town.

The first thing to attract my eye was the sign, "*Grand Baños.*" Now, after a day's ride a man craves a "grand baño" more than all else, so I left the horse and entered.

A large placard on the wall bears the following :

"A tub of water, 13c.

"With towel, 18c.

"The person who desires to change the water will pay 10c. extra."

Determined to change the water at any price, I decided also on the towel.

Cuautla weather is deliciously warm, driving the frost out of your system and suggesting cool beverages. But when I

asked for ice, they had none, though the Indians do pack it down from Popocatepetl sometimes. Mine was an ancient tavern, indeed, with smells more varied than usual. Somehow it made me think of a very green old cheese, myself a mouse shut up in the centre—it was so mouldy and ante-diluvian. My room overlooked a tiled roof, thickly encrusted with the refuse habitually thrown from the windows. Yet the climate is not hot enough to excuse such a lapse into tropical sloth. Cuautla is not torrid, but merely delightful. Living here, one might remain alert, vigorous, and clean.

The air was balmy and soft as I sought the iron bed in one corner of my large bare room, but who knows what a night may bring forth. We do not speak of the predatory hosts, but in Mexico it is both proper and usual. *Hay chinchas?* is a query not indelicate here.

I had finished my coffee next morning when a fellow-sufferer joined me. He had been investigating the kitchen, which one should never do in Mexico.

"I have been watching them strain the coffee," he remarked. "They have one of those Mexican strainers."

"Yes. What kind is that?"

"An old grey sombrero," said he.

Yet Cuautla appears both clean and thriving for a Mexican town. The lack of good hotels is the lack of all Mexico, and perhaps the discipline is beneficial. One learns to do without things. But when I found my horse receiving this discipline I interfered; he needed a change.

A few miles out of town are wonderful sulphur-baths which cure everything—so great is faith. If you have rheumatism, or money, or the morphine habit, you soak yourself in the hot sulphur-water and then leap and praise God. Thither go waggon-loads of people, religiously and without humour, returning to the hotel to talk over their symptoms.

Facing the Zocalo stands an old church, perhaps the oldest in Cuautla, and certainly the most interesting—the expression of a particularly rich architectural

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idea. This beautiful building is now the railroad station. In the good old days a convent was attached to the church, whose cloisters are now filled with sacks of rice, while the nave is devoted to freight, and a flat-car is side-tracked in a chapel.

Where once the good people of Cuautla sought an eternal home, they now embark on purely temporal journeys. Where once its daughters took the veil, and renounced a world of which they knew nothing for the shadows of the cloister, they now secure round-trip tickets for Mexico, where they will crowd seven into a coach and drive in the Paseo, and at night go to a *zarzuela*. A town that will turn its principal church into a station and freight-house, piling the nave with merchandise, is imbued with the commercial spirit, to say the least. This sole instance, of course, cannot be taken to represent the trend of the times, though it may indicate the feeling of the extreme Liberals, who have little love for the Church.

In the town are charming little lanes,

bordered with cacti and with tropical trees, behind which the reed huts of the peons nestle among coffee and bananas. It lacks the lava walls which give so barren a look to most of the villages of Morelos, while the soil is more hospitable and nature more winsome. There is the verdure of the tropics without its discomfort. What are days of the week here or hours of the day? The tourists soak and dream, dream and soak, reserving the evenings for the discussion of symptoms. The natives dream but do not soak—they have no symptoms. Their frijoles are seasoned with typhus-germs from the ditch in which clothes are washed; their dialect contains no word for bacteria.

These quiet lanes, leading anywhere and nowhere, invite you to ramble without so much as a purpose or destination, to saunter in fact. Vistas of rich old gardens appear, of venerable mangoes and lemon-trees and pomegranates. Red coffee-berries intermingle with feathery sprays of peach-blossoms, and jasmine and rose scent the air.

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I had left word to be called at four o'clock the next morning, and at five was jogging towards Cuernavaca through the cane-fields in the first glimmer of dawn.

## CHAPTER XIV

### OLD TASCO

SOMEWHERE in the enchanted distance, in the mountains of mother-of-pearl, lies the village of Tasco. Looking from Cuernavaca in their direction, I had often thought of that mysterious place, where José de la Borda took out his millions upon millions, and where he built his beautiful church, and promised myself some day to depart into that ethereal region of light in search of the fabled village which slumbers amid the hills, and of which only charming rumours are afloat. For no "tourista" ever goes to Tasco; it is not even on his map. It hears not whistle of locomotive, nor crack of cocher's whip.

Even now that I have returned, I am not sure just where it lies, nor that, should



you follow my directions, you would find it. Perhaps it reveals itself to whomsoever it chooses, like the enchanted castles in the old tales, and should you wander in those silent places, you may find that the old trail leads into a cliff. Tasco cannot be taken by storm; you may not even approach it directly, but by the most circuitous routes and devious ways. And, unless you go in the proper spirit you may find no village at all, but only mountain solitudes.

Three of us—lotus-eaters all and duly magnetised by the traditions of Tasco—set out one day for Iguala, where we were to take horses. Each had a sense of humour and no two considered themselves perfected in the same thing, so that we were a most harmonious company.

There were the inevitable fiestas along the road and the train filled up with peons, who eventually invaded the sanctity of the first-class coach, cluttering the aisles with bunches of bananas, baskets of zapotes and live chickens. The conductor came into the car with a Rural to take up their tickets

but made no effort to eject them; he and his military escort, climbing labouriously over the bananas, trod on the chickens and babies and forced their way down the aisle through the sweltering mob of Indians.

It was the full of the moon and Iguala lay dreaming under its tamarinds in the glorious tropical night. We were quartered in one room in the little hotel. It was a large room, but not large enough, and we slept ill.

Wherefore, next morning, three very sleepy men got into the saddle. We were to stay at an hacienda, and our host had ridden down the day before to meet us. Iguala lies south of Cuernavaca, while Tasco is northwest of Iguala, so that a semi-circle of a hundred miles is described in reaching it. We were soon following up the long cañon through grim defiles. On approaching, there is not the least evidence of a place of the importance of Tasco, which is the oldest mining-camp in Mexico. The Spaniards mined there as early as 1521, and the Aztecs long before

that. But it is still reached by a trail through lonely mountain-passes with no sign of habitation. We passed several abandoned silver haciendas, the old patios where the crushed ore was mixed with mercury, and portions of the ancient aqueducts, still standing. The walls of one were intact, but surmounted by a tree ten feet in diameter which springs directly from the top of the wall, while its roots descend on either side. In traversing such solitudes, amid the everlasting hills, one becomes silent. The little world is left behind. So, hour after hour, we rode along, each absorbed in his own thoughts.

At length, ascending a steep slope for a half-hour we reached the summit of the ridge, where suddenly there burst upon us the vision of Tasco. In the very midst of that solitude, surrounded not by seven but by seventy times seven hills, a wondrous old town appeared as if by magic. There, across the barranca, tier upon tier of arches and terraces, a rich confusion of tiled roofs and massive walls, it rose from the creek-bed up, up to the superb cathe-

dral surmounting all—a gem—a veritable gem of the rare old world, dropped as by a miracle in this mountain fastness.

No one spoke. Afterwards the Painter remarked that that particular view was spectacular—but he said it very deferentially. The church dominates all ; the village merely surrounds and leads up to it ; the mountains are a setting for it. It is the matchless centre of that isolated world which exists in the heart of a vast solitude of undulating hills, range upon range. In the background are impregnable cliffs, cyclopean masses of porphyry, towering above, while far below, the stream has cut its way through limestone and shale, forming a tremendous barranca with precipitous walls. Nature is on a titanic scale. Evidences of convulsions and upheavals are everywhere and it was perchance from these terrible birth-throes that Tasco was born into the world.

The hacienda lies without the town on one of the many hills. From its windows we looked at Tasco and the titan cliffs beyond, both so beautiful, one soft and

entrancing, the other austere and compelling. A genial atmosphere pervades the hacienda. We felt its welcome as we entered the gate where the *mozos* took our horses ; and we saw Tasco from there always as through a rosy mist of good cheer.

We would ride down the *barranca* and up the other hill to the town and loiter indefinitely in its quaint streets—for Tasco is as quaint as Le Mont San Michael. Near by is a little red hill, full of tunnels and shafts, now abandoned, but memorable in the annals of Tasco ; for from that knoll Borda took his millions—more than sixty, tradition says—and there lie buried in its bowels a hundred and fifty slaves upon whom the rock caved. Some of this very wealth was transmuted and became the marvellous church.

In Tasco there are no straight streets, none that are level. You are always going up or down, winding around or turning abrupt corners. Curious old houses project into the narrow roadway or hang over the *barranca*, supported by but-

tresses and high walls and approached by flights of stone steps. At every turn there is a new picture, so that at first it is quite bewildering.

In front of the cathedral is a tiny plaza, which is perhaps the only level place in town. Here come the corn-sellers to sit at the foot of the great stone cross, rising from its massive carved pedestal, at the edge of the parapet which overlooks the barranca. Little do the patient corn-sellers know that they make a picture over which artists might rave—the yellow corn glistening before them, and for a background the rich façade of the church, the purple hills. In all Mexico—rare old Mexico—is no picture more memorable. And if these venders appear to be flesh and blood, doubtless they are but evolved from some conjurer's brain; all is magic play—and Tasco the enchanted city. In the fabled hill which gave up its treasure to Borda, perhaps dwell the gnomes who weave the spell—the wonder-workers. At their bidding, silently arose the church, so wondrous fair

you can scarce believe it real. It is they who make the corn-sellers appear at the foot of the great stone cross and on a Sunday the people in the little plaza. At their bidding it may all disappear, as fades a vivid dream, and the brooding silence reign again, as in the long ago, while the everlasting hills give no sign.

In the windows of the cathedral is some beautiful iron work, like that in old Florentine palaces, and no two windows are alike. They came from Italy to do the work—those master workmen who wrought so perfectly in iron and stone, as at an earlier day they left their mark on the Mogul palaces and tombs of India. The interior is filled with their carving, the voluminous scrolls and well-beloved cherubs of the old Florentine work, in great panels reaching from floor to base of arch, and all of rich old gold. Where there is no carving, the walls have been recently daubed with blue and white paint to represent something, marble perhaps—or oil-cloth—painful reminder of the degeneracy of the times. The Humorist gave us a dissertation on the use of

linoleum in mural decoration; the Painter writhed. But in Mexico you must shut your eyes to some things that you may open them wider to others.

So we studied the splendid old pulpit, the work of artists, and wandered into the sacristy, which is a storehouse of beautiful things—antique walnut chairs you would gladly loot, and a superb table which might have been designed for the Medici. The walls are covered with the really good paintings of Cabrera; while from their chests, the old sacristan took out copes, chasubles, stoles, and scarfs, all heavy with gold, which were brought long ago from France.

From the parapet, we looked again at the abandoned shaft and tunnels across the barranca. It is an ugly little red hill, yet it paid for the cathedral and made it possible. The Florentine carving, the iron work, the brodered vestments, the rich and massive stone work—everything but the blue and white paint—sprang from this little red hill.

So passed the days in Tasco—all too



few. Towards evening we would watch, from the hacienda, the mysterious shadows creep up from the barranca and envelop the town, while the afterglow still lingered on the great porphyry cliffs above. Presently it would all slip into the background of night, while the world resolved itself into a single room with its cheerful light, its easy chairs, the rifles and antlers on the walls, the books in their shelves, the cigars and the bottle on the table.

## CHAPTER XV

### A HILL TOWN

IT is a bond I have with old Benito Gonzales in Cuernavaca that his native land—his *tierra*, as he calls it—so appeals to me. For, as he says, where is there another like it? In Michoacan, in Vera Cruz, in Guerrero are no such people as here; and as for Mexico—*Que borrachios!*—what drunkards! The people there have become stupid with pulque. Then again in all Mexico where is there such another view? He loves to put down his sombrero for a moment and discourse, needle in hand, enjoying an appreciative listener.

I have come to feel at home in this charming Valley of Morelos, and to regard travels to other parts of Mexico in the light of explorations, to be undertaken

upon occasion, but with the idea of some day returning to the Vale of Tempe.

It is a wonderful little journey from Mexico City to Orizaba; through the endless maguey fields to the edge of the great plateau; creeping over this rim and crawling like a fly down the mountain-side from the zone of the maguey to that of the pineapple. One sees from the car-windows the ancient pyramids of the Sun and Moon, so often compared with Cheops, but impressive rather by association and imagination than by any actual effect they have upon the beholder. The very names convey occult and mystical suggestions and somehow tickle the fancy. Presently Apam is reached in the midst of the maguey lands, vast symmetrical fields stretching far on either side to the barren hills. Here and there a thriving hacienda with its little church, ample and complete in itself, isolated and feudal in appearance, suggests more than anything else *the* Mexico of the geography and the history books. We seem to be crossing a page of the old school-atlas.

Apam indeed is noted for pulque. *Pulque fino de Apam* must have some such significance to Indian ears as Hockheimer and Rudesheimer to a German, Lafitte and Margaux to a Frenchman ; that is to say, his epicurean fancy takes no higher flight. Here is found the rarest vintage of this wine of the country. Here Bacchus most disports himself—the Bacchus of the pigskin. In these haciendas is distilled the sweet poison that makes imbecile the yellow-man. It is rushed by train-load every morning to Mexico, and by noon a good part of the peon population are doped out of their simple wits. The peon of central Mexico will never get beyond pulque. It is too cheap. Only a blight or a weevil which should efface the maguey from the plateau—and this the gods have not sent—will free him. For no yellow-man ever relinquished a cheap vice for the uncertain advantages of being washed and prosperous.

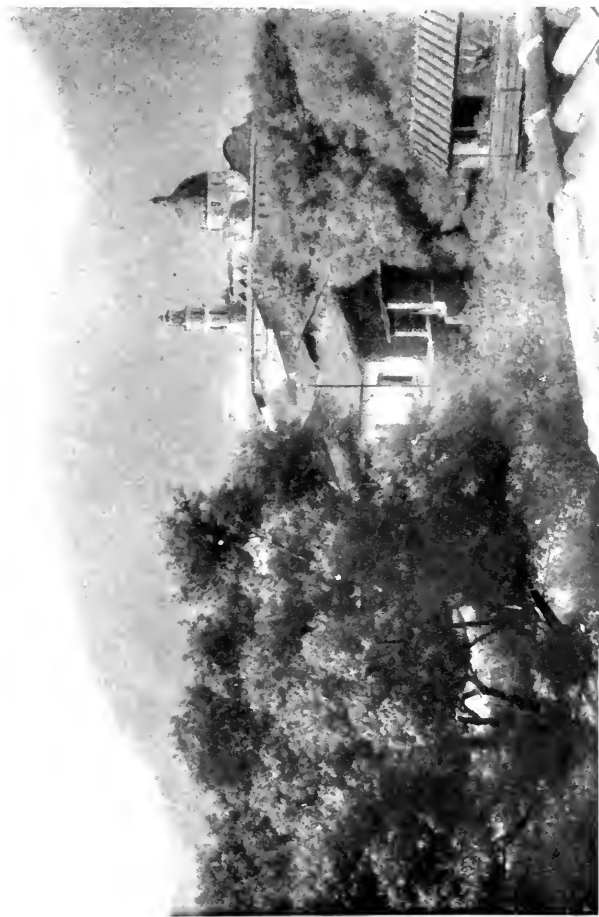
At Esperanza we come to the rim of Cloudland, like a fly that has walked to the edge of the table. The sudden drop

to Maltrata and thence to Orizaba has all the interest of a journey from one latitude to another. In the trees are orchids, and the face of the world is different—verdant, luxuriant, smiling. There is also much “scenery,” as the circulars set forth with the help of many adjectives. Views there are that are “grandly beautiful,” some again “magnificently grand,” still those which are “unspeakably sublime”; and all this the “breathless beholder” shall duly attest.

Above the village of Maltrata one has a true bird's-eye view—literally such a panorama as have the soaring buzzards—for the track is two thousand feet and more, directly over the town, so that seemingly one might drop a stone into it. From this height it is but an ant-hill, and its life no more than the coming and going of insects. To have descended upon a town in this fashion strangely affects one's view of it, having still in mind the diminutive speck, its broadest street but the faintest scratch upon the face of the round world.

Thus one drops into Orizaba, set in the mountains in the midst of the pass—a true hill town. Up this pass comes the breath of the distant sea, bringing its storms and fogs. Wherever the eye turns there is a Byzantine dome and back of it the hills; and these are not the dry barren mountains of the plateau, but green and wooded spurs and shoulders. Among them Orizaba nestles with the charm of a very old settlement. The houses about the stream, which runs through it, suggest that they may have arisen from the ruins of other habitations. The incrustation of age upon its domes and tiles is somewhat richer than in other Mexican towns, and this may easily be because of the humid climate favourable to the growth of mosses and lichens. As in a Persian rug, colours have softened with age. Nestled close to the earth, the houses have lost all severity of line and tint, enriched by this beautiful decay.

Here the mountains are not distant phantoms, but rise from the very streets bold and abrupt. The town is walled



Orizaba nestles among the hills.





about with them. It is this characteristic, together with the domes, which gives Orizaba its strong individuality. For Orizaba is not to be associated with ordinary places, but to be looked at twice as at a personality of some distinction. As with other Mexican cities, there is little glamour of art or poetry, and it appeals because of no man's name or fame, but by its presence alone. No Dante mused in its streets; no Angelo wrought here, investing it with his great personality, so that the place should forever after be linked with the man. No genius haunted its plazas, yet none the less Orizaba holds the fancy.

Like all mountain towns, it is beloved of the clouds. Its gods are storm gods; its tiles and domes speak of the lingering fogs, and the wooded hills of warm rains. Fugitive mist from the Gulf finds its way up the pass and trails, ragged-edged, along the slopes. Little nebulous clouds detach themselves from the parent mist and float over the valley, resolving into fantastic shapes. After the dry air of the plateau, this dampness is not disagreeable.

A dome of antique red, weather-stained and blotched as a boulder of syenite, whose lines are those of the palm, shows well against the rich blue-green of wooded slopes. Orizaba's domes affect one like soft airs. So well do they accord with this setting, they seem indigenous rather than transplanted from afar. The towers have been called Saracenic, but it may be their prototype was the flat-topped organ-cactus, as the dome is the outline of the date-palm in stone. They belong with the cacti to the plateau and the desert.

The charm of Mexican churches is largely of the exterior. They are to be viewed from the outside only and are meant to be a part of the landscape. No one has explained why the Mexican has so often a bare exterior to his house and a barren interior to his church. Perhaps one is to compensate for the other. If you look into his patio you are frequently surprised and delighted at the contrast; if you stand before his altar you are nearly always disappointed. The exterior of these churches reveals the mind

of the architect, who with free play for his fancy gained harmonious results. It was a potent and creative age which sprinkled them over New Spain, as an earlier period had done in Europe. You may come to Mexico with no interest in architecture, as you may go to Normandy, but if you have an eye for beauty you soon find yourself at every new town looking first for the cathedral, and presently take on the very air of a connoisseur.

Not alone to its churches Orizaba owes its character, but to its bridges as well—old Roman arches which span the meandering stream at frequent intervals, and from whose ancient parapets one has the most charming glimpses of the palm-like domes, seen over tiled roofs and little white balconies, all in delightful irregularity and confusion.

Upon one of these bridges I discovered the Painter, seated at work oblivious of the crowd of children and peons which surrounded him, standing on tiptoe and peering over one another's shoulders at the miracle that went on before their eyes.

His white umbrella, expanded like a great mushroom, was a sight which warmed the cockles of my heart, for it sheltered a genial soul; and in this world it is not good, neither fitting, to take one's toddy alone. If you have perchance wandered, solitary in strange towns, then you must know how it gladdens the eye to come upon a merry man beneath a white umbrella.

No more is Orizaba an alien place in which to saunter as in a museum, politely looking at curiosities. The white umbrella has redeemed and made it hospitable. I confess my thoughts slid from those domes and struck a genial level nearer the earth. Meanwhile the Painter, all unconscious, plied his brush. I resisted the impulse, strong within me, to fall upon the neck of my brother, and stood listening to the comment.

"See! It is the very house," said one, as a picture gradually took shape.

"Look! there is the window—and the girl."

Miracle upon miracle. Not only had a

house appeared upon the paper, but a girl at the window ; all this as they watched and exactly as it was over yonder. A murmur of appreciation ran through the little crowd which shifted about, the better to see. In Orizaba was no better subject than the Painter himself, seated before his easel and surrounded by a cloud of admiring witnesses.

At length I bore him off to an inn close by, and the talk was of many things. He had left the stick to his umbrella in one town, and part of his easel in another—what painter has not? He had sampled every new kind of dulce on the street, as was his wont, and experimented with the various Mexican concoctions. The latest was a tequila punch, pink, and of flavour indescribable. I think it was his eye for colour which led him to investigate. The tequila punch looked like a solution of rose madder. He had the courage of the man who ate the first oyster. If he had come upon a drink of cobalt blue or apple green, he would have tried it. He had made some new Mexican acquaintances—

genial soul that he was—and now it was only by getting up very early that he could escape them. They were agreeable young men, but had a way of appearing about lunch-time. If he professed an engagement, they said they did not mind, they would go also.

The Painter continued to produce good stories from his ample supply. I have never reached the bottom of that barrel. Truly a friend changes the face of the world, and if he be a merry man withal, then may you let down the curtain of your mind and mellow and ripen a little in the genial glow and find yourself expanding.

Since I no longer sit solitary, eating grimly like one who undergoes an ordeal, but break bread with my caste, the days pass pleasantly. In odd corners of the old town I am sure to come upon a white umbrella, surrounded by a group of children, who have learned that in return for replenishing the water bottle there will presently be a distribution of dulces.

It is Holy Week. As the doors of the

churches are always open, one naturally walks in. Over the roof and into the dome the cañon wren loves to creep and to lift up his voice, which reverberates throughout the nave, his ringing laugh sounding above the voice of the priest. No sooner does the padre appear in the pulpit than the wren pops into the dome.

"What?" he cries cheerily. "Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho! ho! ho!" and he laughs long and loudly down the scale.

But the kneeling worshippers below are devout and sincere, their voices filled with intense earnestness as they respond. They are sorrowful, too, as if there were no joy in their worship. The wren's is the only cheerful voice in the church. They do not seem a sad people, but at their devotions a pall of gloom settles over them.

A sort of wooden wheel is hung in the belfry, and made to revolve with a loud rattling noise like the sound of a stone-crusher or a paddle-wheel in an ice-jam—perhaps to scare away evil spirits. All day long the ear is assailed with its senseless and deafening rattle.

Never was the approach of Easter more noisily acclaimed. Straw Judases filled with fireworks hang in the streets, and the explosions of the accursed mingle with the rattle of the devil-charm.

Easter dawns, a relief after the din. The parish church is packed, and nowhere could you see more fervent devotion. There are no Easter bonnets. Peon women cover their heads with their rebosos; others are bareheaded. Mass is celebrated with all solemnity, and the grave-faced people gaze upon the altar with sad eyes, the men kneeling upon the wide brims of their sombreros, which serve them as a sort of prayer-rug. Many have their arms extended above them, the faces of all wrapt and devout, as if momentarily expecting the plaster saints in their green and blue robes to bless them.

Near the door, a large glass case holds a figure of the Virgin in a robe of purple velvet. In the nave stands a cross bearing a life-sized figure of the Christ, draped in a costume of white tarlatan somewhat resembling the peon dress. The trousers,



which reach only to the knee, are embellished with frills. But the intense earnestness of the worshippers counteracts whatever absurdities appear. You feel that with these simple people surely you are among the faithful. Their faith, such as it is, is real, and sincerity covereth a multitude of defects.

Laying aside their sadness with their devotions, they are ready to be amused once more. The band plays in the plaza, as it is playing in every plaza in Mexico,—one universal inharmony. The people form into two lines, as usual, the men in one, the women in the other, with the segregating instinct of a Quaker community, and thus divided the procession, male and female, marches solemnly round and round, the entire evening. The line of men ogles, but with due decorum, the parade of women, who, in their best, shyly glance or coldly stare as they see fit. They are eminently proper; there is no approach to any abandon. All the days of their lives they have done this, and yet they do

not tire of it, so dear to them is the evening promenade.

I recall that I came to Mexico with the idea that the Mexicans were a musical people, expecting that the air would be filled with the soft strumming of mandolins and guitars. As a matter of fact, one rarely hears either. The peons, whose speaking voices are so soft, almost never sing. They are silent in the fields and silent at their work. There is no song in their hearts. It is true that the towns afford band music and that the people enjoy it, but it is poor enough. No musician can listen to the best—that at Guadalajara and Mexico—without wishing at times to seize the baton himself and infuse the spirit and precision which it lacks. Nor am I impressed with the church music in this land of churches.

The Judases have exploded, the rattle-box is put away for another year, Easter has come and gone, and the town relapses into quiet, awaiting the next fiesta. The day has arrived when I must leave Orizaba and its domes. Once away from the Valley

of Morelos and its life of *dolce far niente*, the adventurous spirit of the wanderer stirs within me. I am resolved to stand before the far-famed ruins of Mitla; to follow the long trail to Tehuantepec in the south, and to Colima in the west; to saunter in old Morelia, drift on the bosom of Chapala, and feel for myself the Syrian spell of Guanajuato. But first I shall ascend the mountains and cross the maguey fields to Puebla.

My train crawls up the edge of the table-land to the Mexico of the high plateau, so different from the Mexico of which Orizaba is a shining part. One naturally recalls in this journey the experiences of the Conquerors in their remarkable ascent from the sea, with their "cavalry" of twelve horses—or was it sixteen?—and their little blunderbusses. Entering a hostile country as unknown to them as the surface of the moon, with their army of five hundred and their cavalry of sixteen, these men of blood and iron invaded the staunch republic of Tlaxcala, which had often withstood the

terrible Aztec, and, finding the Tlaxcalan hosts encamped upon the plain in full war-paint and feathers, cried, "Here are we!" It was superb. The exploit has but one parallel in history or fable, and that is the story of Jack the Giant-Killer.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A TAVERN OF PUEBLA

**I**N the days of the Conquest, Cholula was a great capital, while Puebla had not been founded. To-day Cholula has dwindled to a squalid village, whereas Puebla is one of the most thriving cities of the republic, a place of commerce rather than of antiquarian interest. Its one attraction lies in the tiled domes of its churches. These are of all colours, and the tiles give to Puebla such individuality as it may possess. They were, perhaps, a legacy from the Moor; for the tile, like the dome, long ago came out of the East.

While the cathedral is certainly less impressive than that of Mexico, its interior is much richer, is in truth gorgeous. It gives one an idea of what the Church was

in its palmy days of supremacy when it possessed most of the wealth of Mexico. But one tires of churches, and I have found my tavern more interesting.

I stumbled upon it quite by accident, one rainy night, and knew it was for this I had come to Puebla. It is a Mexican house, native to the soil. The patio, into which all the rooms open, lies at the bottom of a large well, as it were, for the house is three stories high. This patio, its floor covered with tiles, constitutes the dining-room of the establishment. Narrow galleries run entirely around the two upper floors, and here the guests enjoy the after-dinner toothpick, plying it languidly as they look down at the remaining diners below. In such company the use of the toothpick is regarded as a graceful accomplishment, and is indulged as was snuff-taking in a more courtly age.

At one side of this dining-room is the office, which is also the *cantina* or bar. Behind the counter are sundry ancient bottles of tequila, mescal, and gin, over which presides the sallow-faced clerk, who

is both bartender and *administrador*. A large blackboard stands by the *cantina* on which are inscribed the names of the guests, the Don Pablos and Don Josés, whose windowless rooms open upon the galleries above. The patio, at once dining-room, living-room, and bar-room, and all the people in it, might have been copied from some old print.

Small tables, with their ollas of water and curious long-necked vases of withered flowers, are attended by lank and unkempt waiters, with countenances like those in the drawings of Cruikshank. Exaggerated and unreal, they yet seem eminently adapted to their surroundings—like fish in an aquarium. Guests and habitués as well have the musty look of old books in an auction-room, and seem as remote from present-day life. Their coats, their hats, their shoes are all of an antiquated design which serves to heighten the pleasing illusion of the old print.

Every morning as I am taking my breakfast of coffee and rolls—and Mexicans drink milk with a little coffee, not

coffee with milk, as we do—the administrator returns from the plaza, followed by a mozo bearing on his head an enormous flat basket, more than a yard across, which contains the day's marketing—eggs, meat, vegetables, yellow mangoes, and little cakes. Eggs go into one drawer behind the bar, mangoes and cakes into others. One rather expects to see the meat follow, but the mozo, replacing the basket on his head, bears it to the kitchen. When an egg is required, a mango, or a cake, it is doled out to the waiter, the egg being presented to the guest for inspection before it is cooked. My napkin is tied about the neck of an empty beer-bottle. Those—if there be others—who insist upon having their own napkins, refusing one from the common heap, are identified by their bottles.

It is the dinner-hour and the guests assemble—Mexico assembles, and dips headlong into its soup. Eggs are extracted from the little drawer behind the bar; waiters shamble over the tile floors, tacking this way and that to avoid collision.



The guests are not vivacious like a French company, but appear to enjoy their dinner—there are no dyspeptics. Above all things they are sociable. A new-comer marches from table to table, and one after another of his *amigos* arises to fall on his neck. After going the rounds and being vigorously slapped on the back, he sits down in the best frame of mind, now and again addressing a remark to some one at a distance.

A coatless waiter approaches, bearing a soup-tureen. He disappears in a twinkling, leaving me without a spoon. Your true Mexican garçon always arrives circumspectly and with deliberation, but he departs with celerity, and once out of the room there is no telling when he may return. When you get your eye upon him, you must hypnotise him forthwith. Command him to remain and listen, while you order your dinner—to the end, perhaps, that you will dine on beans and eggs.

He reappears, now with a plate of rice.  
“Bring me some potatoes.”

"*No hay, señor.*"

"Some butter."

"*No hay.*"

"Then bring eggs, scrambled—with chilies."

"*Si! si!—orita.*"

Now "*orita*" is the Mexican equivalent for instantaneous. It applies to the velocity of light—Mexican light. Its significance is electrical and mercurial; it means some time within an hour. A Mexican uses it in a manner implying that he nerves himself for a supreme effort. Should you conceive of a greater celerity than is suggested by "*orita*" you must resort to English—there is no Spanish equivalent.

The eggs arrive and then beans, and lastly a little slice of guava jelly by way of dessert. Unfailing is the supply of guava jelly.

"There is *mole* to-day, señor," the boy announced once, his manner suggesting that "*mole*" left nothing to be desired.

I said I would have some.

It was brought, and proved to be some sort of meat floating in a sauce of pure

pepper. The hottest dish that was ever concocted, it gives you a distinct shock, as if you were swallowing flame.

"What is *mole*?" I asked, having eaten.

"It is *guajalote*, señor."

"Oh!"

"You will have some more?"

"Um—no; not to-day!"

Later I learned that a buzzard is a *zopilote*. Hence I am able to speak of *mole* with composure.

Another popular dish is a *chalupita*, which is a little tart made of peppers and cheese. These are rather good, the fiery flavour being a stimulant.

The kitchen—but one must draw the line.

The *femme de chambre* of this tavern of Puebla is a shock-headed bare-footed boy, whose good nature is exceeded only by his forgetfulness. He is a type of the Mexican *camarista* slow, lazy, not over-clean, but as willing as Barkis and always cheerful. Whereas he frequently leaves you without a towel, he never fails of his native politeness. José may be unwashed,

but, like most peons, his notions of etiquette are strict. He wishes you good morning on entering the room ; he says "With your permission" as he withdraws. To the good housewives, the José of Mexico is a cross. But doubtless the "servant question" is no more of a problem here than elsewhere.

In the town are more modern inns, but no such quaint company and surroundings. I meet a superannuated bull-fighter, still wearing his cue and little flat hat ; a captain of Rurales dining with a friend, and small hacendados bringing their country-bred families for a few days in the "city." If their table manners are bourgeois, their studied courtesy to one another is almost patrician. The old school deportment is still in vogue—the manners brought from the mother country to old New Spain ; they still have time to be polite—not only to strangers but to the family.

You will hear this courtesy criticised on the ground of insincerity.

"When a Mexican offers you his house, he does not mean it at all," say the critics.

He means it in the sense intended; it is not the deed he offers you, but the *entré* to his house—quite another thing. He is perhaps as sincere as are we when we say, “How do you do?” quite perfunctorily. The only valid criticism of Mexican courtesy is that it may become tedious.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE FAITH OF CHOLULA

NOW and then a mule-car runs from Puebla to Cholula, a rather squalid town, whose interest lies in the bloody pages of the Conquest, and which must, therefore, be seen through the historian's eyes.

The great pyramid of Cholula has to-day the appearance of a vast mound of earth, and there is little to indicate to the casual observer that it is artificial. Covered with a thick growth of shrubs and trees, as some monuments are incrustated with mosses, it is only in places that one sees its layers of bricks. When the wandering Aztecs came to Anahuac they found it here, and they could tell the Spaniards only traditions of its having been built by a race of giants. Like other monuments

of antiquity, it was probably the work of slaves. A pyramid on a desert looms large, but this is almost at the foot of some of the highest peaks of North America. As you look from the little hill to the towering volcanoes beyond, you recall the old fable of the frog and the ox.

The Holy City of Anahuac, Cholula, like Jerusalem, was perhaps given over to the dry and learned discussions of the doctors, and frequented by Scribes and pharisees. It was in fact a very Benares—the home of priestcraft. From all over Anahuac came the pilgrims to prostrate themselves in the great teocalli of Quetzalcoatl upon the summit of the pyramid, whose undying fires could be seen over the valley. Famous for its pomp and ceremonial, hecatombs of victims were sacrificed upon its altars.

The Conquerors destroyed the temple and erected the church in its place, to which little pilgrimages are now made. With the downfall of the Quetzalcoatl, Cholula lost prestige, and a thriving busi-

ness ceased. It has never recovered. To overthrow a god is a serious matter; it disturbs public confidence and unsettles trade.

The Cholulans were of evil repute; a crafty and double-faced people, so the sturdy Tlascalans warned Cortez. He, however, applied successfully the maxim of David Harum—well known at that early day—and saved his skin. Their temples were without number, straining their religious zeal to supply the required victims. The little Spanish army would have furnished a full contingent, and the zealous Cholulans had planned to honour it in that way.

From the summit of the pyramid one sees to-day an astonishing number of churches—ten times as many as can be needed—indicating that the Cholulans, though their city has shrunk to a mean village, still retain some of their ancient characteristics. I plodded to the top in a drenching shower, and with me went Concha, a little waif, whose efforts to dispose of her wares revealed her artful



Cholulan nature. No matter how I might divert her mind, it unerringly returned to the main chance—would I not buy a bit of flint or a fragment of stone, a relic of the pyramid?

“Ah! *niño*”—in her caressing voice—“you will buy; ah, yes—just one?”

Concha walked around the summit, indicating the churches, but said she was not able to count them all. Meanwhile she amused herself crushing what she called centipedes, of which there was a prodigious host, with her bare toes. They were not true centipedes, however, but only distant connections. She paddled in the puddles, but kept her reboso drawn over her mouth. It was not good, she said, to breathe the damp air. Having cut her finger, as we entered the Church of Los Remedios, which stands where once stood the teocalli, she dipped her small dirty hand in holy water.

“Will that make it well?” I asked.

“Surely,” replied she with evident conviction.

"Concha, do you know who Quetzal-coatl is?"

She shook her head.

"Did you ever hear of him?"

"No, señor."

But faith is still very much alive in Cholula; it has merely been transferred. Just inside the door of the church, the walls are festooned with little figures, hung there in token of cures effected, besides numbers of crutches, many little pairs of legs, and scores of arms. It is a curious collection, indeed, and a significant one.

Los Remedios is apparently a Mexican Lourdes, and belief bears fruit. Besides the little figures — *muñecas* — are pictures, quite evidently "hand-painted," and all gratefully dedicated to the Virgin. Here is a child, for whom, so the inscription avers, were tried all "the doctors and other persons" of Cholula without avail. But the Virgin of Los Remedios heard their prayers. The gem of the collection depicts a train at full speed. Not of the Impressionist school, it is done with rectilinear precision and in blue and

red paint. In front of the engine, and prone upon the track, is the figure of a man, already quite flattened out. The engineer—he is in yellow—is looking at him from the cab window, but the serenity of his yellow countenance is undisturbed. He has the cold heart, the set face of the true chauffeur. But, in spite of his indifference and the momentum of the blue and red train, he who lies prone upon the track is saved by the intervention of Our Lady of Los Remedios.

From the text it appears that he had been for a *pasear* at the fiesta of Trinidad, where he had passed the day, as he naïvely remarks, “without encountering any novelty whatever.” While waiting for the train, however, he was overtaken by “misfortune,” and fell in front of the locomotive. He does not state the nature of the misfortune, which is to be inferred.

In these days, when educated Mexico is becoming agnostic, the simple Cholulan keeps unchanged the ideas which Father Olmedo brought to New Spain, and which Cortez would have had them accept at

the sword's-point. Great Quetzalcoatl—mystic deity of the air—before whom all Anahuac trembled not four centuries ago, is forgotten, his sumptuous temples crumbled to dust.

While the Indians are so faithful, the descendants of the Spaniards who christianised them with the sword have become more or less indifferent. In place of telling his beads, the progressive Mexican reads Herbert Spencer. It is the women and the Indians who throng the churches. "They do nothing but go to church," said one man to me with disgust, referring to the women of his acquaintance.

The Mexican Indian, of whatever race, is religious in a sense that we are not; that is to say, in an Oriental sense. It is part of his Asiatic heritage, quite as much as the colour of his skin. As with all Eastern people his religion is essential to his life. He has not the contemplative spirit of the East—he does not think—but he has the true Oriental devotion.

While I was reading the various placards which testify to the efficacy of Los Reme-

dios, Concha was lost in prayer. Still hoping the Gringo might be persuaded to buy, she followed me down the pyramid, her face wrapped in her reboso.

"So you don't know Quetzalcoatl?"

"No-o, señor."

"But you know who San Antonio is?"

"Ah—yes."

"And if you lose anything, he will find it for you?"

"He can."

"Why do you put that leaf on your face?" She had a green leaf pasted on one temple, a common remedy with the peon.

"That is for my headache."

I bade Concha good-bye, more than ever impressed with the faith of Cholula.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### OAXACA AND MITLA

THE State of Puebla is a succession of churches and haciendas. Indeed it is the Normandy of Mexico. Every turn in the road reveals some old tower or tiled dome, far in the distance, perhaps, but conspicuous in the landscape, rising as it does above an isolated patch of green, with the beautiful desolate mountains for a background.

Nature has provided the towns on the plateau of Mexico with a lovely setting. Here is Oaxaca with a site like that of Florence, and Oaxaca is only one of a multitude. The dress of the people has more colour than one sees farther north—sashes of red, yellow, and green, and bright silk kerchiefs. But the characteristic thing about Oaxaca is the ox-cart,

which would make any street in the world interesting. Creeping like snails through the town, their primitive wooden wheels lumber from side to side, the beasts, nose to the ground, bowed under the enormous yoke, while the driver marches by their side goad in hand.

In Oaxaca the talk is of mines, as in Cuautla of symptoms. Pass any group on the street and you hear "shaft," "tunnel," "crosscut," "veins." Day and night this goes on without cessation. Enthusiasts outside your window awaken you in the small hours discussing "concentrates" and "carbonates." Here are no politics—the world is mining. Your café rings with the vernacular of the camp. It is a new conquest of Mexico, but the same old thirst for gold.

Tourists seek out the church of San Domingo, the pride of Oaxaca, whose interior, perhaps the most gorgeous on the continent, is said to have cost thirteen millions. The walls of this splendid old structure are plastered over with gold. There is so much gilt and white, all pinked

out and set with countless oval pictures, that at first you think only of the old valentines. After a while you get the general effect as you lose the detail. When the light is subdued, this harmony of white and gold, tempered by the blue skies of the innumerable little pictures, is really beautiful, if you go to the altar and look back. But this altar, with its dozen little pavilions of wood, is itself out of keeping and a disturbing element. The ceiling is crowded with figures of popes, archbishops, and saints, large at the edge of the dome and growing smaller and smaller as they climb to the apex. I counted one hundred of these smug visages above the choir alone. The concentrated gaze of this cloud of witnesses from out of their gilt heaven is really startling. It is a relief to escape from the surveillance of that saintly company and ascend the tower by the spiral staircase, which affords glimpses through loopholes of the pink and yellow town beneath and the mountains around. From the belfry you behold the paradise wherein Oaxaca lies.



Looking down, you gaze on acres of what was once an immense convent, and is now the barracks. If the modern Mexican woman wishes to abjure the world, no convent opens its doors, while if the youth joins the army he may be quartered in one. It is strange indeed to look upon the old nunnery which stood for such renunciation of our present ideals; to see the world, from which they shrank so timorously, now rampant there; to hear the blast of bugles and the snort of horses, where once were whispered *aves* and holy sighs. The saint has had his day and Mars is in the ascendant.

As I sit solitary in the hacienda of Don Felix, in Mitla, musing in the delightful seclusion of its patio, I know that Mitla is worth while—one of those memorable little journeys which atone for the disappointments of travel. The patio is a bower of flowers and a haven of rest. Remote is the world, and one dreams, amid the limes and pomegranates, fit dreams of the mysterious temples near by.

One look at the horse brought to the

door of my hotel in Oaxaca, and I had decided to go out to Mitla in a volante. We no sooner started than we became part of a procession strung out along the road for twenty-five miles. A fiesta being in progress at Tlacolula and another at Mitla, the whole populace of Oaxaca seemed en route that morning. The highway of Tule takes its sinuous course across the level floor of the valley between the sombre mountains which enclose it. Hour after hour the volante jolted along with the procession which, like a caravan, followed this ancient road. Now it would fall in behind a string of ox-carts toiling slowly on their solid wooden wheels; again it would break through a herd of cattle, the driver lashing them right and left, to come next upon a train of burros laden each with two large jars slung in netting. Once a great flock of goats completely blocked the road, but the determined volante jolted on, the frightened animals falling over each other and the goatherd uttering maledictions in Tzapoteco.

At Tule we left the caravan, making a

little detour to see the big tree, the ahuehuetl, which is one hundred and fifty-four feet in girth. It impressed me as being larger than any of the Sequoias of California, though it is not of great height. Its trunk, however, is not symmetrical like that of the Sequoia, for this cypress has a peculiar method of growth, throwing out great flanges with gaps between. The big tree of Tule was doubtless contemporary with that unknown race who built the temples of Mitla, for it may easily be as old as the Christian era. If it did not see them come, it saw them go, beheld the last of that people of whom we know absolutely nothing. Having outlived a race, it still flourishes like the green bay, keeping its strange secret.

Like those of Mitla, the streets of Tule run between solid lines of the organ cactus, as curious a hedge as one may see anywhere. The plants, straight as ramrods, grow so close together that hardly a lizard could creep between them. All the little lanes and by-ways of the town, as well as the high-road itself, are bordered with

these living fences which are as characteristic of the valley of Oaxaca as are lava walls of Morelos or the maguey of Puebla and Mexico. About the cacti is something uncouth and strange. They seem to belong, not to our times, but to some earlier geologic age, with reptiles and antediluvian monsters.

So, at length we came to Mitla—Mitla the prehistoric, the mysterious, the unknown. May its secret be kept with that of the Pole. Man requires a few mysteries, as he requires an unexplored region. What will become of us when we have been everywhere and know all about everything? Mitla is almost the last of the Sphinx's secrets and should be preserved for posterity. Its perfect workmanship commemorates a people possessing some of the arts and a well developed idea of beauty. But whence did they come or whither did they depart?

To go from Oaxaca to Mitla is to go from a city of the living to a place of the dead. Standing in a barren spot, the ruins are surrounded by sombre hills. The first

Spaniard to visit them found the place named "Hell" in the native dialect. The Tzapotecos call it "the door of the grave." In descriptions I have seen, it is referred to as the ruins of a great city. But there is no evidence of a great city—only ruins of temples, palaces, or tombs. The town, if such there were, consisted probably of huts of cane or mud. There is much speculating as to how the stone was cut, but this is a soft stone, whereas the Egyptians worked in syenite and granite. Travellers wonder how they placed the great lintels over the doorways, or transported the monoliths. How did the Egyptians erect the pyramids? Man-power will accomplish these things if you have men enough. There is no mystery in this. But that a race, having such perception of beauty and symmetry, should have lived so long ago in this remote region and have given their ideas expression in an architecture peculiarly their own—that is the marvel.

The best-preserved section, known as the North Court, is certainly one of the

beautiful monuments of antiquity. Its stones, perfectly cut and faced, are set without mortar or cement. Its low, massive style, rectangular and geometric, without an arch or curve anywhere save in the columns, is full of dignity. Huge monoliths surmount the square-cut doorways, while the walls within and without are enriched with mosaics in intricate geometric patterns, giving a peculiarly refined and delicate appearance to a structure in effect massive as a fortress. Like an antique gem it is set here in the solemn landscape amid the cacti.

There is a present Mitla, built on the site perhaps of the ancient city, a village of cane huts hidden behind their cactus walls. Incapable of temples, the moderns project nothing more lasting than a mud house. Their old men dream no dreams and their young men see no visions. The villagers speak Tzapoteco, an uncouth and barbaric tongue, and look curiously at the stranger within their gates, as upon some new and undesirable species of man.

The Tzapotecos are reputed to be very



· An antique gem set in the solemn landscape.





independent : certainly you cannot get in touch with them as with the polite natives of the villages of Morelos. You have a hopeless and baffled feeling, as if you should try to make the acquaintance of a community of prairie dogs. They do not understand Spanish and have not yet heard of the Conquest. While the village of Mitla is but twenty-five miles from Oaxaca, it is sundered by an immense gulf of time from the world of to-day. The twentieth century is not due here for a thousand years to come.

## CHAPTER XIX

### A WEEK ON THE ISTHMUS

**I**T is a far cry from Mexico City to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec of irreproachable immorality—from the oil-stove to the hammock. The “Tierra Caliente” is another and distinct Mexico, as different from the great plateau as is Egypt from Italy.

I had thought of making the trip on horseback from Oaxaca, but found it was a matter of six days, among a peculiarly inhospitable folk. Moreover, there were no good horses to be had.

The Vera Cruz and Pacific Road begins at Cordova and ends nowhere—that is to say, at Santa Lucretia—and its like is not in all the world. As a matter of fact, the journey is not as bad as it

is painted. We were four hours—precisely four—without going off the track.

“Shure, they ’ve had eight drinks,” said the merry Irishman, sententiously, as the train left the rails in a languorous tropical way and jolted over the ties. “I ’ve took notice that whiniver all hands has eight drinks—we lave the track.”

In the morning mist we slid past symmetrical grey-green fields of pineapples, and dropped gently into the hot country, through miles and miles of palm jungle, where the trees are buried in piñanonas, orchids, and ferns. Giant creepers depend from the branches of tropical hardwoods, and gorgeous red and yellow blossoms light the shade of the jungle. It is the veritable “Tierra Caliente,” the home of monkeys and parrots.

In this torrid zone the white man fights the good fight with rum and nature—and loses. Scorpions and pinolias assail him ; infinite gnats, countless flies, unspeakable bugs lie in wait. The heat melts his backbone ; the ceaseless rain depresses.

Slowly and surely the insatiate jungle closes in, claiming her own.

If the white man labours, he also drinks deep.

"A man must drink more in this climate," he meditates.

Presently he takes to himself a yellow woman. His liver swells and his nose turns red. He goes without a collar; his shoes are unbrushed—for what does a yellow woman know of these things? His love is called Poker, and his ideas suffer change. Alas for the Remittance Man of high hopes; alas for the dream of tropical farming. The monkeys laugh at the toy rubber trees and the jungle bides her time. Well if the adventurer escapes before it is too late—flees from the jungle, the yellow woman, and the bottle. Else he gets tropical paresis, and his usefulness is over.

The stations on the road are not Mexican, but semi-Western and altogether dreary. Chinese eating-houses, with their cheap bars and their camp grub, suggest the old California mining-camps. Here

you put your own zinc teaspoon into the sugar-bowl, lest you offend by your superior ways ; drink without wincing if any one asks you to, and hold your tongue.

The difference between the Atlantic and Pacific slopes is remarkable, even on this narrow isthmus. Once the low range of mountains is crossed—a shrunken vertebra in the great backbone of the Cordillera—the palm jungle of the eastern slope gives place to the cacti and arid lands of the Pacific coast. At Tehuantepec it is almost rainless, while just over the hills, rain is frequent. This peculiarity is as marked in Mexico as in South America. In fact, all sorts of climates and conditions belong to Mexico, induced by altitude, latitude, and position east or west of the plateau ; but none more remarkable than this, where in a few hours you pass from the damp, soggy jungle of lower Vera Cruz to the semi-desert of southern Oaxaca.

One wonders casually why the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was not chosen for a waterway in preference to the Isthmus of

Panama. The Coatzacoalcos River is a considerable stream for some distance from the coast, and the harbour of Coatzacoalcos is said to be excellent. Whatever the engineering difficulties might be, the width of the isthmus can hardly exceed a hundred and twenty-five miles, while a canal here would afford a route from New York to San Francisco some twelve or fifteen hundred miles shorter than the Panama route. That the Tehuantepec road will be a serious rival of the Panama Canal is a foregone conclusion.

The village of Tehuantepec lies on the edge of immense cocoanut groves in an arid and dusty region, which might, to all appearances, be northern Africa. The men are more or less degenerate and utterly insignificant. But the woman—the Tehuantepec woman—is the wonder of the land. Doubtless her charms have been exaggerated, but she is the flower of Mexico, none the less. Straight as an arrow, her carriage is superb. Here is beauty unadorned, and here, if anywhere, you may see the divine feminine as Nature

intended. Her costume is a skirt, or *nagua*, of cherry or scarlet cotton, striped with white, black, or yellow, wrapped close about her and revealing outlines which are often statuesque, and a *juipil*, a sort of zouave jacket of purple or blue, sometimes of red also, and always with a wide border of bright yellow. This is sleeveless and low-necked, and discloses superb arms of bronze, sometimes of copper, moulded on splendid lines. Lastly there is the *juipil grande*, or head-dress, which is a huge affair of lace, stiffly starched and with a wide flounce, so worn that it flares back from the head, falling to the waist, in the manner of the feathered head-dress of the Aztecs and of some Indian braves. Often a silky material of gamboge or apple-green forms the centre. It is in reality a sort of garment with sleeves, but is usually worn in this odd fashion.

You meet them in the lanes through the cocoanut groves—these robust Tehuana women—always with a *jicara* or painted gourd on their heads, filled with

fruit or flowers. They walk as do few others of this earth, and hold their heads like beings of a superior race. *They* are Tehuantepec—they in their barbaric colour—treading the earth as if it were theirs, while the little men shamble about with the yellow dogs—degenerates both.

You see them in the market, and so Oriental is the colour, almost you might imagine yourself in India. For this is tropical Mexico, and children of the tropics the world over love the splendour of crimson and scarlet and gold; even the birds wear brighter hues.

Woman dominates this village on the torrid Isthmus. On the dusty streets and the narrow lanes, wherever you look, she is there, always with the *jicara* well poised, always with her superb carriage, her free and easy stride. You only notice a man, so insignificant is he, when he shins monkey-like up the stem of the cocoanut palm, drawing his machete after him to cut the cocoanuts. Then he is in his element.

In the market are many pretty girls,



and this is saying much for Mexico, a country where one becomes discouraged and no longer looks at the women; many pretty girls, and one, yes, two that are positively lovely. There are also not a few fat women. Among the elder dames are some strong and well-made faces, faces of character and poise. Were it not for the colour of their skins, they might, in another dress, pass for sensible American matrons.

Now the Tehuantepec River flows near by, and thither go the villagers to bathe and refresh themselves. Should you walk along its banks towards sundown you would, peradventure, have a glimpse of nut-brown maidens, clothed only in modesty, disporting themselves like water-nymphs. You might blush, but they would not. They would merely slip into the shallow river and make an effort to hide beneath its clear water, laughing softly among themselves. They are quite modest in their behaviour and look well under trying conditions. The stream meanders across a flat sandy plain, and

on one bank extend the cocoanut groves for miles. Round about, the mountains are barren and parched, showing beautiful hues, umber and sepia in the foreground, violet and azure in the distance. In the sunset light the river is a slender band of pale gold, while the hills are as ashes of roses. Then it is that the sands are dotted with scarlet-clad figures, with here and there at the water's edge an unclad nymph and many brown boys and girls capering about.

One hears much of the customs of Tehuantepec. The bronze nymph—she of the superb carriage—is reputed the Delilah of Mexico. The Isthmus, very naturally, is provided with a true isthmian code of unmorals, but 't is no flaunting abode of sin, as some would have you think. There is no gilded vice in Tehuantepec—not so much as a glitter. Amid the dreariness of mud huts and palm shacks, of frontier hotels and kerosene lamps, how should there be? The vice of places is always exaggerated. It must be that some go about looking for it,

as others are always sniffing for evil odours.

To the Isthmus come the flotsam and jetsam of society—driftwood and wreckage from Europe and America; sea-tramps from Cardiff and land-tramps from Texas. And over all is the deadly miasma of the commonplace, more to be feared than the fever. The Latin-American viewpoint, inherited from decadent Rome, naturally commends itself to this class. If it is a thirsty place, what isthmus is not?

It is the night which is acceptable here—the serene tropical night which comes with infinite relief after the torrid heat of the day. Breezes wander through the cocoanut palms, which gently sway overhead like vast plumes. The air is lulled by insect voices. The heavens are very near, the vast starry expanse which reveals translucent depths behind depths in which float myriad luminous worlds. Indescribably soft and balmy is the air. You take refuge in the night, in its coolness, its stillness. With your mind's eye you see the

lanes through the cocoanut groves, and the women—going to market and to mass in “nagua” and “juipil” and “juipil grande” with centres of apple-green silk, of scarlet and lemon yellow; it is as if so many gorgeous tulips had sprung up on the shadowy lanes and in the brilliant sunlight, flaunting their royal colour.

The rhythmical dream-song of insects is the pulse of the world—your own pulse—throbbing with measured beat. Thought ceases; you lie in your hammock under the stars and are absorbed into the night.

Suddenly it is day again in Tehuantepec—uncompromising day. There are no intervals, no gradations. On the instant, the Isthmus is awake. Once more all is light and heat and colour.

Such are the day and the night.

## CHAPTER XX

### FAIR MORELIA

ON my first morning in Morelia, I was awakened, at daybreak, by a deep sweet-toned bell, apparently striking the hour, and lay hovering deliciously between this world and the Land of Nod, inexpressibly soothed by its reverberations. As you may count on your fingers the sweet-toned bells you have heard, I added this one to the chimes of Antwerp and the Campanile of Florence.

The beautiful bell finished striking the hour and went on with the days of the month. Presently another followed, not so sweet but still not discordant. This was succeeded by a third, and that by others. Then all the bells in Christendom seemed to break loose to greet the timid dawn. They played every discord known

to man ; tolled, clanged, pealed and jangled, till the air was rent with sound. It was as if in every belfry a troop of gleeful imps madly tugged at the ropes, and the sun was high when the clamour ceased.

My window looked out upon a charming little plaza, and the superb cathedral with its beautiful old towers, softly illumined by the early sunlight. Gazing down a street which has no superior in Mexico for the quaint character of its architecture, I straightway fell in love with Morelia and went out to learn its ways.

It was, it seems, All Saints' Day, and Morelia, in sackcloth and ashes, was engrossed in the world to come, and given over to praying for those in purgatory, a place sadly different from Morelia itself, which is indeed a little paradise. Around the Zocalo and in the adjoining streets, innumerable tables were devoted to wares befitting the occasion,—miniature coffins, catafalques, and processions of paper priests, skeletons in rude paper chariots, carrying little green parasols, and life-sized skulls in sugar. Religion is a serious affair

here, and the padres are more in evidence than elsewhere.

It can never be said of Morelia—as of Monterey and Guadalajara—that it is Americanised. Originally named Valladolid, it might, except for its Indian population, be a town in Spain to-day, so Spanish is it in appearance. One hears no English and sees few foreigners on the streets. The hotel, designed for the bishop's palace, is a dignified old structure, supported upon many columns and affording vistas through its arches of several interior courts. Streets may have individuality, and the Calle Nacional, upon which you look from your window in the bishop's palace, is one of some distinction. The sculptured façade of the church, the governor's palace, itself a fine bit of old Spanish work, the long line of portales with their little balconies overhead, all breathe dignity and age.

This Calle Nacional ends in a stone Calzada, leading to the park of San Pedro, a delightful old "bois." For its whole length the Calzada runs between massive

stone balustrades, overshadowed by venerable trees on either hand, through which the sunlight filters as through a lattice, lighting here and there a zerape or a pile of fruit. Parallel and skirting the wood is the aqueduct, like the Calzada, massive and Roman. Work of this character, so enduring and so good, speaks for itself. Substantial burghers and lovers of beauty, the early Morelians thought well of their city and builded for posterity. The ancient aqueduct still serves its purpose, its waters bubbling up in the fountains, to which the water-carriers come to fill their graceful jars as of old.

Calzada and aqueduct, like the cathedral, are legacies from the beauty-loving days. There is, too, the bull-ring, after the manner of Spanish bull-rings and the Roman coliseums before them. The bull-fight is as much in favour as ever, and Morelia is agog over the latest matador from Spain. It is along this Calzada that the señoritas may shyly venture to promenade, duly attended by watchful dueñas. The face of the señorita shows no trace of





The ancient aqueduct still serves its purpose.



sophistication, while the countenance of the duena is sour and elongated. It is not strange, perhaps, that the duenas all look alike, possessed as they are of one idea. An aggressive consciousness of virtue, truly awful, confronts you in their piercing eyes. It is plain to see they regard man in the light of an ogre—the señoritas are safe.

By the side of the Calzada prances now and again a cavalier attended by his mozo, like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Sancho rides a sorry nag, and is himself a sorry wight ; but the master is a rollicking blade indeed, with his sombrero, his sword, his pistol, and his great spurs. Sancho has no pistol and but a cheap hat, looking lean and limp as he bestrides his old hack and ambles dutifully behind his gay "patron." A touch of the spurs now and again, and the first horse curvets and champs his bit. The señoritas demurely glance, the duenas glare.

This old wood at the end of the Calzada is the most charming imaginable. Here you wander beneath venerable trees

through an undergrowth of rose-bushes. There are long shady walks, with vistas of the aqueduct, while delightful little dwellings—*à la Petit Trianon*—surrounded with roses and orange trees, are scattered about. Something idyllic there is about this *bois* and the little houses in the midst of their rose-gardens. They are the dwellings of the fairy story, whose inmates must of necessity be ideally happy. Little wicket gates, over which roses are climbing, admit one to these bowers of the enchanted wood. Distant and muffled, the reverberations of the great bell of Morelia sound throughout the park, a clear, sweet booming, as deep and serene as the voice of the surf. When this bell speaks the air seems to throb, as if with feeling, and one involuntarily pauses to listen.

One of the charms of Mexico is the association of certain arts and crafts with particular places. Railroads and modern business methods do away with all this, as they often—where things artistic are concerned—lower the standard of excellence. Morelia is as famous for dulces

as is Saltillo for zerapes, Aguas Calientes for drawn-work, or Guadalajara for pottery. This is the very land of sweetmeats. You wonder Morelia was not made of sugar. Under the portales are continuous rows of tables, laden with Brobdignagian sweets—vast piles of sugared yams, great strips of melon-rind, whole oranges and lemons, and chunks of pineapple and squash, and the confections for which this town and Celayo are known, put up in little round wooden boxes. Everything is sugared.

It is a constant regret in Morelia that one cannot take some little American by the hand—say a dimpled rascal of five—and lead him through this labyrinth of sugared things, to watch his eyes grow saucer-like with amazement, and eventually to stuff his small pockets till they bulge with excess of sweets. The little Morelians have become indifferent; they are born into a world of sweetmeats.

At night these candy-booths are lighted by primitive oil lamps which resemble flaring torches, and the entire “esplanade”

is lined with fondas, each with its *brassero* and its torch. The smell of frying meat pervades the air. Each is the centre of a little circle, who nightly sup here in the open, forming picturesque groups. There is a strong suggestion of the camp-fire and of aboriginal life about it all. It is, in fact, Indian life unchanged; the life of an Indian people who have few points of resemblance to the American Indian as we know him, and who from the earliest records have had a larger sense of civilisation. But these dark-skinned groups, seated around their little charcoal fires and flaming torches, do none the less bring to mind the early savage; and it is significant that in the very shadow of the cathedral such customs still obtain, almost with their original force.

One evening as I stood watching this scene a closed carriage passed, when instantly, as if at command, men, women, and children dropped upon their knees, and so remained until it was out of sight. Some had been fanning their fires, others eating their tortillas; children were play-

ing about, and groups stood talking and gesticulating, but one and all knelt in silence. The carriage contained the Host, and as soon as it had passed the men, resuming their hats, returned to their supper or their gossip.

Of late the Indian has grown tolerant. In early days the Host was carried about in a carriage drawn by white mules. If you did not then fall on your knees before it you were likely to be stoned—a fate which has actually overtaken the scoffer.

This esplanade is by far the busiest part of the town, and the best lighted, many of the streets being illumined only by the stars. Artificial lights are few and far between, and one should properly have the services of a link-boy on venturing into the dark and fearsome places. This is quite in keeping with the venerable character of Morelia. It would be as great a pity to do away with the flaring torches and glowing coals of the street venders as to replace the aqueduct. Why disturb the ancient seclusion and obscurity? Imagi-

nation revels in the romantic possibilities of the dark old streets.

Should you follow them, you might have a peep into the houses: the best room on exhibition with its innumerable chairs, arranged always with precision along the walls, and its many large vases of artificial flowers. The fashion is stereotyped and time-honoured. Throughout the length and breadth of Mexico are the selfsame chairs, set with equal rigour, the identical vases.

Peradventure you would encounter more than one love-lorn youth, standing beneath a window,—as near as he may approach in his shy and distant courtship. He is “playing bear,” as they say in Mexico. Thus the course of true love runs here. It may, perhaps, be smooth as long as there are iron bars between the lovers. How should they do otherwise in Morelia—or in Seville? Shall not tradition have an abiding-place here and there? and may there not be a nook and corner in the world where good old customs still obtain, for the benefit of painters and writers and chance travellers



seeking the tonic of old wine for their jaded fancies? In Morelia girls still live screened from the wicked world, like nuns in their cloisters, while enamoured youths, gaze from the safe distance of the street, anticipating the far-off day when they may enter the sacred precincts of the best room, and, in the august presence of mamma and papa, discreetly converse.

Morelia by moonlight is a dream of the Middle Ages. The cathedral and the columns and arches of the portales—all sharpness of outline lost in the pale enveloping light,—are enchanting. Not far from the Zocalo is a little street, having on one side the School of Arts, on the other the venerable College of St. Nicholas, the oldest in America, and terminated a little beyond by the rich façade of a church which is worthy the best days of Florence or of Venice. There is no suggestion of ruin, only the dignity of age. It reminds one of a good old violin which has improved with time.

It is because of such gems as this, which

the city holds untarnished still, that one thinks of "fair Morelia"; and indeed Morelia in Mexico is every whit as fair as Seville in Spain.

## CHAPTER XXI

### A STRANGE QUEST

**I**T is but two hours by train from Morelia to Patzcuaro, but the transition is great ; for Morelia is a beautiful little city of the old world, glistening on the plain, while Patzcuaro — well, Patzcuaro is a sleepy village lost in the Sierra above the mosquito line. It is quiet enough in Morelia, heaven knows—a place in which to dream and indulge your fancies ; in Patzcuaro you rusticate.

Not within the memory of the oldest inhabitant has anything happened here—if we except, of course, the advent of the railroad. Once upon a time the good bishop Quiroga smote a rock in the centre of the village—having in mind a classic precedent—and the waters gushed forth, to flow from that day to this. In his long and

useful career among these simple mountain people, he certainly rendered no more valuable service. Patzcuaro was agog over it—very naturally. Then, in the course of a few centuries, appeared one day a thing which snorted and hissed and ran over the ground on a track. No Tarrascan had ever seen or heard its like. But that, the work of neither bishop nor saint, was not accounted a miracle, being perhaps attributed to the Devil instead. Once every day it continues to appear, still snorting, but has wrought little change in Patzcuaro, and would not be missed if it stopped coming altogether.

The pine forest touches the village, and the streets, winding, crooked, and uneven, are paved with the roughest of stones, so that one walks without dignity. After a few stiff-necked efforts, one assumes a bibulous gait, hugging the wall now and again to avoid a burro train or a lumbering two-wheeled ox-cart. Travellers are few, arriving for the most part on horseback, their baggage trains following. Now and then the little court-yard of the hotel resounds

with the clank of spurs and the clatter of hoofs. Sometimes it is a troop of Rurales, and again an hacendado and his family, their coming the sole incident in the uneventful days of Patzcuaro.

The lake yields whitefish which the Tarrascan fishwives offer in the market, strung upon rushes, or laid upon the large green leaves of aquatic plants. Pottery from Uruapam, and heaps of cocoanuts from the hot lands beyond, are lighted at night by the glare of little fires. The shops, which surround the plaza, adapt their wares exclusively to an Indian population, and the stock in trade resembles that which the Spanish adventurers brought to barter with the aborigines—strings of beads, cheap knives, looking-glasses and trinkets—anything that shines and attracts the attention. To these emporiums come the peons, as children go to a toy bazaar.

Patzcuaro, in the Tarrascan tongue, meant "the place of pleasure," and when Tzintzúntzan was the capital, the royal persons are said to have come here for recreation. It was, perhaps, a sort of a

Sans Souci. If the ancient monarchs were of contemplative mood, if they enjoyed themselves after the manner of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, for instance, then one can understand their coming to Patzcuaro, to meditate under the pines upon the vanities of the world ; or from the hills to contemplate the beauties of nature. Nezahualcoyotl, the Texcucan, was the only Indian monarch of those times, so far as we know, who had this exalted and philosophic nature. But the Texcucans were the Athenians of the continent, in comparison with whom the Tarrascans were perhaps little more than savages.

Happily Patzcuaro has no ruins to visit, but across the lake lies Tzintzúntzan, and in Tzintzúntzan abides the famous Titian. It is for that one comes to Patzcuaro, and there is perhaps no more novel expedition to be undertaken in Mexico. The ancient capital of the Tarrascans is now but a squalid village—its glory has departed ; but, like some community of gnomes, it guards a treasure. Imagine a Titian or a Murillo in Dutch Flat or Gold Run!

How curious to go picture-hunting in a dugout paddled by Tarrascan Indians; how much less conventional than to drag through some chilly Pitti Palace, Baedeker in hand.

Morning mists were still lying over the lake when I stepped into the canoe, which was hollowed from a three-foot log and had a pointed ascending prow, like that of a gondola. The Indians sat bow and stern and used small round paddles, clumsily fashioned by themselves. Great flocks of yellow-headed blackbirds circled over the bullrushes, their golden heads gleaming in the sunlight, while innumerable ducks floating on the still waters, as if asleep, only took wing when the canoe was among them. As we paddled over the mirror-like surface, now and again the head of a water snake raised itself. On this mountain lake in the heart of the wilderness it were easier to believe oneself looking for game than for any picture.

We passed some Indian boys practising with their cane lances, with which, I was told, they were very expert in killing ducks.

Once we landed amidst the rushes to pick the fruit of the granadita growing on the bank. Several islands dot the lake, and from a village on the steep slopes of Xanicho the sound of the church bell came softly over the water. It was thus that the Tarrascan kings came in their royal dugouts to the gaiety, or the solitude, of Patzcuaro. No pleasure craft float upon its waters now, no royal caieques. There are no tourists—no kings. Only the paddle of an occasional fisherman's canoe breaks the silence. Along the shore are the primitive huts of the simple fisherfolk, and their nets hung out to dry. Gathering the rushes which grow at the water's edge they make them into mats, their only occupation beside fishing.

The Indians paddled swiftly and we sped over the serene surface for three hours or more, rounding one headland after another.

"Tzintzúntzan!" they said softly at last, indicating a church among the trees, —all that could be seen of the ancient capital. Some Peter and John were pull-



ing in their nets on the shore, and we waited to see the catch,—a handful of whitefish.

Everyone in the village seemed to know what I had come for. The people—a gentle, kindly lot—indicated the way, almost without my asking it, and following the straggling streets I came at length to the church on the outskirts of the half-ruined village. Tzintzúntzan is as silent as Pompeii.

The sleepy old churchyard is surrounded by olive trees, in themselves worthy of a visit. They are of vast size, larger, perhaps, than those in the Garden of Gethsemane, and fully as venerable in appearance. Yet they can hardly be over three hundred and fifty years old, and may be younger, for of course they were planted by the padres; whereas those of the Garden of Gethsemane purport to be the original olive trees. Either they, too, have not seen more than three centuries and a half, or olives in Mexico grow six times as fast as in Palestine, which is hardly probable. The elevation of Tzint-

zúntzan, moreover, is seven thousand feet.

Accounts I had read led me to approach the church with the anticipation of a mild adventure. At least I expected to cajole the jealous Indians, and was prepared to propitiate some venerable padre with a Spanish courtesy and munificence worthy an hidalgo of Spain. I pictured myself entering some double-locked, dungeon-like room, preceded by a solemn procession of Indians bearing torches; then the venerable windows would creak upon their hinges and the sunlight suddenly fall upon the wonderful picture.

Alas! I saw no padre, no solemn procession of Indians. I merely walked into the church, and there in the tawdriest of tawdry interiors was the Titian.

I looked at it, as the layman looks at most of the work of the old masters, with a sense of dutiful appreciation. The picture, which is painfully realistic, is exactly what it is named—an entombment. The sky is dark, the faces sorrowful. It shows intense feeling—gloom, unrelieved by

hope. In front of it stands a miniature coffin, containing a little figure. Picture and coffin are quite in keeping.

Sitting in the shade of one of the old olives, I found myself less impressed with the painting than with the fact of its being there. It is said that some fifty thousand dollars has been offered for it, but the Indians refuse to part with their treasure. In the same church, on the opposite wall, is another picture which may be worth fifty dollars. These poor Indians can hardly recognise an artistic difference in the two. Either the subject of the entombment especially commends itself to them, or they have some valued association with the Titian.

Returning through the village, I stopped to speak to the storekeeper—a smiling little man of irreproachable manners.

“You have seen the picture, señor?”

“Yes.”

“There was a man here from the church in Mexico, not over six months ago, who offered five hundred thousand dollars for it.”

"Fifty thousand, was n't it?"

"No, señor; it was five hundred thousand."

"That is a great deal of money."

"Ah! most assuredly it is."

"And they will not sell?"

"No, señor. They will never part with it."

"Why not?"

"*Quien sabe?*"

"And the olive trees?"

"They were brought from Rome by the padres about two hundred years ago, it is said."

Very deceptive is the lake of Patzcuaro. Its mood had changed. It was now all tumult, and we rocked and pitched. I lay on the bottom of the canoe, watching the little green waves as they rolled by, until one curled over the edge, followed by a score. The Indians had bought a rooster in Tzintzúntzan, which they wrapped in a zerape. The protestations of the bird, now nearly afloat, mingled with the tumult of the waves, and the voyage grew so tempestuous that it be-



Hunting Titians in a dugout.



came expedient to leave the craft at the village of Okuchucha and cross the promontory on foot to Iguatzio on the other side, while the Indians worked the canoe around the point.

It was eight o'clock, and the wind had somewhat abated, when they finally appeared on the shores of Iguatzio, and we paddled under the stars in the silent night to Patzcuaro. The return voyage required seven hours instead of three, because of these fickle moods of a mountain lake. Yet it was well worth while. One cannot go hunting Titians in a dugout every day; and it is good to visit a community who have something they hold above money.

## CHAPTER XXII

### UNBEATEN TRACKS

TWO thousand feet lower than Patzcuaro, on the edge of the "hot country," lies Uruapam. It is at the intersection of two zones; to the east ascends the temperate, while to the west one descends in a day's ride to the tropics. From Uruapam I proposed to go across country to Colima. The latest map of the section I could find bore the date 1865, but I reflected that probably the villages through which the route lay had not changed meantime, nor built new or better trails.

The town is lost amidst the coffee bushes, which grow twenty feet high, and bear prodigiously. It still maintains its peculiar craft—that of painting on wood—but the artistic quality of the work has



been sadly corrupted. I found the artists at work—the same gentle, kindly people I had so often watched in Morelos, and, like them, absorbed in their task. They were ornamenting bowls made of the gourd, which they first engraved, then coloured with their fingers or with a bit of cotton, rubbing on the colours dry and covering with oil before polishing. The work is skilful, but the designs are without merit. I asked if there were “antiguas” to be found, any of the old work. “There are a few pieces in Uruapam,” they said, “but they are heirlooms and cannot be bought.”

In Uruapam I encountered my good friend the Pioneer, for thirty years a miner in this country. Daily we sought the pines above the town, where I listened to tales of dead and gone bandits. Under the spell of a strong story, simply told, we crossed the plains, hunted elk and buffalo, and followed the long trail to Mexico. True it is that lonely years in mining camps and in the wilderness do not obscure a good heart. Never were

such tales of the trail and the camp as were unfolded there under the pines and on the old bridge by the waterfall.

After some difficulty in obtaining horses, they were finally secured with the aid of the Prefect, who upset my plans, however, by declaring the trails from Los Reyes to Tuxpan to be altogether unsafe without an escort. He would not think of trusting himself there, he said, without his Rurales; for a community of bandits lived in those mountains in the State of Jalisco, outside his jurisdiction. So that route was reluctantly abandoned.

"That's an old dodge," said the Pioneer. "I would n't mind what he says; if I wanted to go, I'd go."

But he admitted there were some bad people in Jalisco, who had killed two of his mozos, and that it would be embarrassing to part with one's clothes on the road, to say nothing of one's dignity.

At last one morning I heard the horses stamping in the court-yard as I put on my clothes by candle-light.

"*Vamos!*" shouted the mozo. "*Mu-*

*la !*" and away went the white mule, my trunk swaying on her back.

In true Mexican fashion I embraced the Pioneer, and the little cavalcade trotted through the deserted streets into the silent country.

The route to Los Reyes lies over the Sierra, which, in Michoacan, is covered with odorous pine woods. All the world seemed fair and life was good. Throughout that day we followed dim forest aisles, hearing only the woodpecker. The road wound in and out between grim volcanic peaks ; it was the lonely heart of the Sierra where the light is ever subdued. We had crossed the divide and were riding over a little plateau, when the trail made a turn, and there in the west loomed the volcano of Colima. It seemed near at hand, but was in reality eight days' ride. No smoke issued from the crater ; apparently Colima was at rest.

Journeying steadily we came to San Juan de los Colchos—that is to say, St. John of the Bedspreads—a famous village in these parts. For not only do the women

make wonderful bedspreads, but there resides here a plaster saint who performs miracles. Mighty have been his works, so that he is known far and wide among the Indians as the "Lord of the Miracles." The dwellings of San Juan are regular block-houses, made of heavy hewn timbers, very compactly put together, and so un-Mexican in appearance as to suggest another race of people.

The cavalcade halted at the village fonda, the white mule was relieved of the trunk, and girths were loosened. While the old woman was frying eggs for lunch, I seated myself on a log and plied her with questions. There had been great miracles, she said, and pilgrims came from a distance. Why, only last year there was a whirlwind in the village, and a woman was carried up in the air.

"And she came down?" I asked.

"Yes. The Lord of the Miracles brought her back safe and sound."

The pilgrims, it seems, leave some eight thousand dollars a year, and fifty thousand has been spent on the new church.

All that afternoon Colima was more or less in view as we gradually descended into one of the most beautiful of Mexican valleys. It was nine o'clock when Los Reyes was discovered, and the tired beasts dragged their weary legs up the long street, which seemed an endless lane in a jungle of bananas. Man and beast put up for the night at the *meson*, which is a sort of caravansary. There were tea and bread for supper, and corn-stalks for the beasts. The "tea" was made of orange leaves. Everywhere peons were lying on the floor, wrapped in their zerapes; but I, being a rich traveller, had a room. I kept on my clothes to make sure of them, and hung the revolver over the bed-post.

Los Reyes was left before daybreak without a regret. The following night was spent at Zamora, a very fair town, where fresh horses were secured. In Zamora they are building an immense Gothic cathedral. The old cathedral still stands, and the two evince the flourishing condition of the Church. Priests are ubiqui-

tous; there is no "higher criticism" as yet in Zamora.

The inn is kept by a German, whose English I recall with pleasure.

"At what hour will you be raised up?" he asked. "At the one?"

"No," I replied solemnly, "I will not be raised up at the one, but at the four."

From Zamora to La Barca, some eighteen leagues, the way is through vast corn-fields and immense tracts of grazing land, where cattle are literally as the fabled herds of buffalo. My good animal was making time, when we came to a stretch of road full of sink-holes. These looked innocent enough, for the mud had dried on the surface and would bear the weight of a man. Two Indians by the roadside, warming their tortillas over a little fire, wished me good-morning, and allowed me to ride all unsuspecting into the treacherous bog. The next moment I was off the horse, and the poor beast was floundering up to his belly in the mud and sinking deeper with every plunge. He was extricated at last, but the ad-

venture had broken his spirit. The mozo had fallen behind with the pack-mule, and when he arrived there was a long delay in getting around the bad ground. He told me he had once lost a horse in that very place ; yet it had not occurred to him to forewarn me.

Several leagues beyond we came to hot springs, whose boiling was audible some distance away. I paused before a gently simmering pool, whence arose a cloud of steam. Suddenly a great volume of water shot into the air, with subterranean rumblings terrifying to hear. The startled horse recovered his vim and we continued our journey.

As we entered La Barca the Angelus was ringing, and the town was in gala dress. It was the fiesta of the Virgin of Guadalupe, greatly venerated here, and everything was given over to the occasion. Prices were exactly quadrupled, which partly explains the popularity of the fiesta. Streets were decorated with fluttering tissue paper of different colours, and myriads of little paper lanterns, quite like

fairylane. One room was left in the hotel. It was not cheerful, and I inquired if by any chance there were not another.

"How about that one?" I asked, indicating number three.

"There are five people in there."

"And number four?"

"Six people in that room."

"Number five?"

"Six also."

I did not push the inquiry.

As I heated my coffee next morning over little sticks of charcoal, the quaint earthenware dishes stood out in relief on the kitchen wall in that flickering light. It seemed cosy and sociable, and even that small blaze was comforting.

From La Barca to Ocotlan is eight leagues. We were to make it in time for the boat, which leaves at ten. As we rode through the town a tremendous cannonading was going on; bombs were exploding, crackers sputtered, and rockets hissed, while the streets were as full of smoke as if a battle were in progress.

Evidently the mozo had had too much



fiesta. He was a small man, who collapsed under his big sombrero, till there was little to be seen but the hat and a huge pair of spurs depending from long leather leggings. Rain fell and the wind blew. From time to time the white mule strayed off into the corn-fields with the trunk, but the disconsolate mozo only retreated further under his sombrero. There was still a league to go when the preliminary whistle sounded—a shrill little pipe in the distance. *Andale! andale!* the trunk swayed and teetered, the sombrero and spurs were almost jolted out of the saddle. As the bedraggled cavalcade tore down the bank the boat was putting out; the trunk was thrown on board and we were off.

On the lake we felt the full force of the storm. The wretched little craft pitched and tossed all that afternoon like a chip on the waves, which were of astonishing size. At every roll the propeller was out of water, the engines panted, sighed, stopped—then reluctantly went on again, groaning in a new key. There were no

small boats and no way of bailing out the cabin should she fill.

But I came at length, after such mild adventures, to Chapala—one of the few towns in Mexico that may be called a resort. Like Cuernavaca, it is one of the idle places of earth—a place in which to loaf and invite your soul. You may wander along the shore or float idly on the lake; you may bathe in December. But if floating and dreaming are not to your taste, Chapala is not for you. Every one there belongs to the leisure class.

Lake Chapala has a languid beauty, according with voluptuous and dreamy moods. The scenery is not “sublime” but very lovely. A railroad circular says that Humboldt considered this unsurpassed by any lake in the world, and that it has over a thousand square miles of water. But Humboldt saw it in its prime. Like Popocatepetl it has changed. When I went to school Popocatepetl was twenty-one thousand feet high. Now it is less than eighteen thousand. But Chapala is still charming. The Indian canoes drift list-

lessly upon its bosom ; the clouds—great white cumuli—float leisurely over the azure hills. Soft is the wind, balmy the air, the days idyllic.

. . . . .

If you have been tenderly reared you should not attempt to discover Colima, but be warned by earlier explorers. I left Chapala one morning by stage for Atequiza, whence I was to go by train to Tuxpan. To drive his eight mules, the cocheró had three separate whips and a supply of stones. One whip was for the wheelers, one for the next team, and the third, with a lash more than thirty feet in length, for the leaders. The first two he managed himself, but for the third he required a helper who coiled the long lash and handed it to him, whereupon it was trailed upon the ground and then deftly brought down upon the backs of the leaders. The assistant also threw the stones.

The train was due at Tuxpan at six that afternoon. It arrived at one the next morning. At once I made arrangements

for the journey to Colima, securing two good mules. Just two hours remained for sleep—quite enough for explorers. I saw nothing of Tuxpan, which is the part of wisdom.

No sooner had we left the town than we began descending in the darkness an immense barranca. But the sure-footed mules seemed to feel their way, and where the trail was wet and slippery would put their hoofs together and slide. The old road to Colima and the coast is one of the most remarkable in Mexico. It is still the great highway for pack-trains, which transport everything from Colima to Tuxpan, the present terminus of the railroad. We must have passed a thousand animals on the road. There were pack-trains of one or two hundred mules laden with bags of salt, and innumerable little bands of burros carrying cocoanuts. A mule carries four hundred pounds of salt and the grade in the barrancas is in places like the trails in the Grand Cañon of the Colorado. The road sometimes is broad, paved with cobble-stones, and provided with stone balus-

trades; again so narrow that with difficulty one gets past the files of mules without being flattened against the wall or shoved off the cliff. From the bottom of the barrancas you see the mule trains far above, threading their way up the cliffs and almost hanging over the edge.

My mozo on this trip was a bold rascal; I am sure he had been a bandit. He wore tight blue trousers, a leather coat, long leggins, and stuck in his red sash was a revolver as big as an old-fashioned horse pistol. When he addressed me I never felt sure whether he was about to demand my money, or to make a casual remark. However he robbed me only of the amount agreed upon and I can recommend him as an honest muleteer.

At Tonila it is customary to spend the night. It is a mere mountain village, but because of the pack-trains and travellers, of peculiar interest. A fiesta was in progress, which promised an amateur bullfight to the sporting blood of the country. What with the leather coats, white trousers, canary-coloured leggins, and horse

pistols, the little *meson* was for all the world like a green-room. The pistol is universally carried; no one would feel dressed without it. The yellow leggins were ceremoniously polite, but all ate with their knives.

Lying at the base of the volcano, the town some day may meet the fate of Herculaneum. Savants will explore and discover. There will be a museum of the utensils and ornaments of the people of Tonila, who were destroyed in a single day by the great eruption of the year —, a collection containing many horse pistols, but no forks.

Beyond Tonila the road, which has skirted the base of the volcano all the way from Tuxpan, gently descends into the beautiful valley in which lies the town of Colima. The fire-peak is a perfect cone. From its crater now ascends only a faint wreath of vapour, but occasionally there are explosions and discharges of ashes and stones. The last great eruption was in 1903. The mountain looks the scarred veteran that it is, a vast chimney, twelve

thousand feet high, built of ash and slag, whose sides are seamed with great rents and cracks. The old peak rises two thousand feet higher, but is no longer active. Than Colima, there is nowhere a more typical volcano in appearance.

As the road descends into the valley, splendid trees of the fig and mimosa families — vast, spreading, fatherly — shelter the straw huts and cattle of the natives. Then come the rice fields and groves of slender-stemmed cocoanut palms. It is the tropics at last; from the pines of the Sierra to the palms of the Pacific.

“Are there scorpions here?” I asked timidly, on my arrival at the hotel.

“Only a few in *this* room,” was the reply. “We keep this room clean.”

The climate now is perfection. It is just hot enough in winter to do nothing comfortably and without fatigue. When the band is not playing, Colima is really delightful. A little stream runs through the town and the palms bend gracefully over it, while parrots fly to and fro from their great mud nests in the zapote trees. The

men are reformed bandits and the women braid hats. In almost every doorway some one is weaving the straw in and out mechanically, smoking a cigarette meanwhile.

From Colima, a narrow-gauge road leads to the ancient port of Manzanillo. The train runs three times a week and the cars are of the square-wheeled type. Boys bring green cocoanuts to the station, and if you buy, they snip off the top with a machete that you may drink the milk. The train returns the same day, giving you three hours in which to see the place. Manzanillo covers several acres and is still growing. The climate is perpetual August. But the bay is beautiful, a glorious sapphire set in the undulating hills and fringed with the jungle. Instinctively you turn your back on the simmering town and face the sea. From the hills you look out over the Pacific, which sighs its ceaseless lament on the rocks below. From this bay, long ago, a little expedition set sail for the Philippines. That was the beginning of our troubles.



While waiting for the train to start, you may lunch at "Delmonico's," whose proprietor is a Chinaman from San Francisco. But in "Delmonico's," was that which endeared it to me—nothing less than a punkah and a veritable punkah walla. The swish of the punkah and the shimmer of the sapphire sea—that is Manzanillo.

A large breakwater is being constructed, and the road will soon be completed between Colima and Tuxpan, which will bring Manzanillo in direct communication with the interior. The mule trains will disappear, the horse pistols and canary-coloured leggins will gradually decline.

In Colima I rest and cultivate the gentle art of doing nothing, against that day when I must bestride a mule and set out over the mountains towards Guadalajara. So far not a scorpion has appeared.

All day the cocoanut palms wave languidly in the soft breeze and glisten in the tropic sunshine, while from the perfect cone of Colima a faint white plume is extended in the intense blue.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### A GUADALAHARA SCHOOL

“SURELY you are going to Guadalajara?” I had been asked again and again. “Why, that is *the* place in Mexico to see.” So, half disbelieving, I came.

It is the individual note which constitutes the charm of such towns as Cuernavaca, Orizaba, Tasco, and Morelia—a charm of which Guadalajara has little. Such, however, is the force of Mexican individuality, that attenuated to the last degree, it is still potent. Like Oriental life, it never altogether loses itself, never becomes wholly merged in anything else. That indefinable something which is the basis of the picturesque, as opposed to the commonplace, is there, and reveals itself at every turn. It hides in filth; it masquerades in rags.

One morning I took the little mule-car which passes the door, indifferent as to its destination. Rumbling along for three blocks it stopped, whereupon the driver wound the reins around the brake handle and disappeared into a long adobe house. Though time went on and he did not reappear, the passengers showed no impatience. An old woman lit a cigarette and puffed meditatively. A young girl produced a vegetable resembling a large white turnip, and munched it with quiet satisfaction. I thought of Alice's ride over the checkerboard and half expected the goat dressed in newspaper to appear and take a seat.

Presently a confused babel, the din of many childish voices, floating out from the adobe house, so aroused my curiosity that I left the car, and entered in search of the driver.

Stranger scene I never beheld. In the doorway an aged crone fondled a puny infant, while within, some fifty urchins sat and sprawled upon long benches, shouting something at the top of their lungs, their

roving black eyes now fixed with one accord upon the intruder. In the dim background a man, apparently the teacher, wielded a pair of shears, and in front of him, sitting upon a small wooden cart, was our truant driver, having his hair cut.

The schoolmaster, for it was he, left off his hair-cutting and came forward with an effusive greeting.

"The house is yours, señor," he said, his face all smiles, as he begged me to excuse him while he finished with the shears. I thought of the long-suffering passengers waiting without, but forgot them again in the interest of the proceedings.

The narrow room was lighted by several large openings, which served as windows. At the extreme end was a low partition of cotton cloth, concealing, perhaps, the domicile of the schoolmaster. On the floor lay a pile of blue powder, like the bluing used by washwomen. A boy was mixing this with his hands, now and again giving it a little pat. On a side bench were the sombreros of the muchachos, as

dirty as their owners. All had brims, but many lacked crowns.

A hen and her brood entered and pecked at stray kernels of corn scattered about. Occasionally they darted under the bare feet of the scholars, dodging in and out with great dexterity. But the indifferent boys kept on shouting. It was their way of studying.

At length the driver was ready, the mule car rumbled away, and the teacher could turn his attention to the rabble of boys. The hubbub seemed neither to confuse him nor to disturb his good-nature. As he was about to resume his instruction, a second customer appeared. Again the small cart was produced ; again the smiling barber made his excuses, while the uncomfortable victim, facing the disorderly class, resigned himself to the shears.

Some of the larger boys were reading from some small pamphlets. Others having no books, repeated from memory, and shouted loudest of all. As the ear grew accustomed to the din, it appeared that

they were not all repeating the same thing. Some little fellows proclaimed the alphabet—

“Ah, bey, cey, tshey, dey, ey, effey!”—shouted an urchin who looked like a little woolly black bear.

“Enne, enn-yey, O, pey, koo!”—roared another, whereupon the two grasped each other by the hair.

The larger boy who had been patting the bluing on the floor, now approached and rubbed his blue hands vigorously over the faces of the combatants, which sufficiently subdued them. On his way back he finished wiping his hands on a trowsled head here and there with a certain patronising air, which identified him as a sort of monitor.

What mischief there was in those roving black eyes. Mexican children frequently have beautiful eyes—except for which this class suggested a band of monkeys. Something prehensile and altogether monkey-like there was in their attitudes and gestures. They clung to their seats, as if these were the branches of trees, and made

faces at one another like so many apes—cheerful little apes, all unwashed and agrin.

Their garments were two, a cotton shirt and a little pair of cotton trousers, evidently home-made. A few possessed both zerapes and guarachas. So ragged were the small cotton trousers, that they hardly held together.

One bench, quite apart from the others, was reserved for the incorrigibles. Every little while, the larger boy, leaving his pile of bluing, selected an unruly scholar, seized him around the waist, and dumped him on this bench without further ado. The disgraced one relapsed into pantomime and soothed his injured feelings with grimaces. Usually he poked his neighbour in the stomach and they were at it again.

“Ah, bey, cey!” roared the little woolly bear. But at “effey,” a small arm was sure to hook itself around his neck and choke him, or a brown fist to clap itself over his mouth.

All this time the schoolmaster was intent upon his art. I wondered if he were also

a leech and would let blood, administer hot water, and perhaps pull a tooth. A pig, hotly pursued by a woman, entered the room full tilt. No one evinced surprise. But for the presence of visitors, doubtless he would have been allowed to remain, with the hen and her chicks.

"Study!" commanded the master at last, disposing of his comb and shears and seating himself.

"They are very stupid," he sighed, waving his hand toward the class; "they learn nothing."

"It was evident that in his simplicity of heart, he had never questioned his method of teaching.

The crone, walking to and fro with the sickly infant, paused from time to time to stir some melon seeds which were drying over a few bits of charcoal. Once she too had been a waif with interminable years of poverty and toil before her; and this future was the heritage of the infant. But the sallow face of the schoolmaster was cheerful as he watched them. This was one of seven, he said. Seven! I glanced at the



screen, which was as it were the façade of his dwelling, and mused on domestic bliss and the comforts of home.

"They are so poor," continued he, indicating the class once more. "They have no slates, no paper, no books."

Then he went on to tell me about the school. There is, it seems, a very old padre — *un viejito* — in Guadalahara; and so charitable is he that he fills his house with homeless boys to whom he gives shelter, and for whom he begs a mite here and there, although bent with years. The gamins live by day on the streets, returning at night to roost. But alas! They abuse the hospitality of the good padre, for he is too old to control them; and so disorder reigns, and the gamins even cast the rubbish into the well.

It is this "viejito" who has founded the school for the "pobrecitos," and even written the little pamphlet which is their Reader. Mindful of their spiritual welfare and alive to the heresies which encompass them, he has warned them at the outset.

The pamphlet is entitled "A Brief In-

struction to Guard Children against the Errors of Protestantism"—the last words in very large letters. It begins thus :

"What manner of thing is Protestantism?"

"It is a multitude of heretical sects in disagreement amongst themselves and hostile to the Holy Church."

Then follows a brief account of the dire heresies of one Luther, "in order to give an idea of the deplorable state of his soul, which was the result of separating himself from the Holy Church." Later we are told sadly that the apostate monk "died obstinately in his heresies."

No modern Luther will, I believe, arise in Guadalajara. Certainly not if he owe his acquaintance with Religion and Letters to this exposition of the "Errors of Protestantism."

The school fascinates me, and I often revisit it, always to find the young theologs still "studying" and presumably pondering the sad consequences of heresy. At the market one day I procured fifty pieces of sugar-cane—large succulent sticks—and



The schoolmaster declared a recess.



took them to the boys. As I approached, the heresies greeted my ears ; but the instant those black eyes spied my burden of sweets, the shouting ceased, and in its stead arose a pleased murmur of anticipation, a joyous little ripple of content. The errors of Protestantism were forgotten ; the solemn warning was unheeded. Fifty sets of sharp teeth crunched as many pieces of toothsome sugar-cane. It was as if fifty kittens should lap fifty bowls of milk, or fifty puppies gnaw fifty bones. Never before in the history of the school had sweets thus descended upon them, like manna in the desert.

The schoolmaster declared a recess, and I scattered pennies among the rabble.

“Who is the best boy?” I inquired. For the moment the gnawing ceased and a shout went up.

“Who is the homeliest?” I asked again, displaying a small silver coin, and one weazened urchin, in whom avarice was stronger than vanity, boldly laid claim to the distinction and received the prize.

After some days I shake from my feet

the dust of Guadalajara. Rumour had led me to expect a city of exceeding beauty, shining from afar. It is not there. What I found was the school, and the joy of that lives with me.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### A GLIMPSE OF GUANAJUATO

**I**T was late when we arrived at Marfil and stepped from the train to the little tram-car which runs thence to Guanajuato. In the darkness nothing was to be seen of the town. The passengers blinked and nodded in the light of the flickering lamp, while there came to the nostrils the odour of the night air, laden with impalpable dust and with the savour of Mexico.

At length the car stopped in front of the hotel, and we penetrated to a dim interior court, paved with cobbles, where the worthy Boniface led the way to the windowless rooms opening into the patio.

Next morning the clatter of hoofs in the court-yard awoke me, as a burro poked his woolly nose into my open door.

“Burro!” cried the milkman, and the little beast backed out and clattered away with his milk-cans.

Out of the gloom of the dingy hotel I stepped into the clear air and dazzling sunlight—of Palestine! To be sure there were neither camels nor Bedouins, but none the less, the stern and solemn landscape of Judea, the flat-roofed monochrome houses of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the women going to the wells with their classic water-jars, and beyond—the violet mountains of Moab.

As later I look down from the hills, it seems that some such spirit broods over this solemn scene as over Judea to this day—the spirit of the Past holding the land under a spell. You experience here the sensations of the traveller in Palestine. The mind seems suddenly to reach back into the centuries and to stand face to face with primitive times, as by some enchantment.

For days you are content to merely bask in the sunshine, allowing this Oriental illusion to possess you, and drinking in



the charm of the place. More than once I have retraced the tram ride of the first night, for this road to Marfil is one to be remembered. The barren mountains, bold and clear cut, are full of strength and repose. Little box-like adobe houses perch on the hill-sides, surrounded by organ cacti, while strings of burros come and go along the precipitous trails, like so many ants. Following the stream, the road winds down the long gulch past the many silver haciendas, fine old castle-like structures, buttressed, ramparted, and well ensconced within their massive walls, which impart to it a certain rare and mediæval aspect. In the olden days men built with more character and infused a stronger personality into their work.

The prevailing tone is dust colour, varying from that to the hue of mud. Streets, walls, houses, pigs, dogs—even the people—reflect variations of this one earthy hue. A chocolate stream runs between chocolate banks, on which men are making adobe bricks in the burning sun. But this mud of Guanajuato is no com-

mon soil. So impregnated is it with silver that the very pigs wallow in an argentiferous mire; the houses are made of it, the winds laden with a silver dust. As you bowl merrily over the road, you see chocolate pigs coated with silver; chocolate peons spangled with it, while the whirlwinds powder you with the precious metal. No mean highway this, but a Wonder-street in Wonder-land!

Strings of burros laden with little dust-coloured sacks of ore file along the narrow road and over the causeways which lead to the haciendas. Delightfully antique are these bridges and causeways and watch-towers. Here is one of the world's great mining-camps, but how different from a camp as we know it; from the desolate ugliness of Cripple Creek and Virginia City, with their hideous "dumps," their barren vistas, and squalid houses. The typical mining-camp is the abomination of desolation. As if to offset the riches underground, there is a sickening poverty of appearance on the surface. But here in Guanajuato is a wealth of picturesque

life whose crudeness has long since been mellowed: the peon in his zerape, the charro in his leather suit, the woman with her water-jar, the mediæval haciendas, each and every one a picture which makes you for the time a painter.

In these haciendas the old patio process is still in vogue. They tell you that it is the cheapest for low-grade ores, but you accept it rather as a picturesque defiance of the God of Machinery. The little burros leave their sacks of ore to be crushed in the venerable mill, whence the powdered rock is at length transported to the patio to become a huge mud-pie of silver and vitriol and mercury, in which, day in and day out, mules are driven round and round by bare-legged peons, wading to their thighs. In the patio the peon receives twenty-five cents, Mexican, for his day's work beneath that broiling sun. He does not live long.

The day's work for twelve cents! The sinewy bronze figure urges on his patient mules within those mediæval walls, thinking his poor mediæval thoughts meanwhile.

Fabulous wealth has come from these mines—and to him, a *real* a day. Twelve cents for a man! Until the diminutive spark of intelligence sputters and goes out and the exhausted body, succumbing to its terrible toil, sinks into the silver mire! Ah, what a pie indeed!

Wailing its lament at every turn, the mule-car carries you again up the long gulch. At the upper end, far above the plaza, lies as it were, another Guanajuato, not Syrian but Pompeian. Pedestrians hug the wall, while the mules on a dead run, race through narrow and tortuous streets, where every turn reveals a new glimpse of the town below and of the mountains, until at last you ascend into this Mayfair of Guanajuato which lies strung out along the stream in the narrow ravine, embowered in flowers. You have emerged from the arid region into a little world of Pompeian colour, as voluptuous and languid as the other is sordid and full of toil.

Rose-embowered and vine-clad, the houses, nestling about silent pools which

reflect them again and mirror their warm tones, seem to have been transported from some more languid sensuous south. Gorgeous peacocks sun themselves, spreading their royal plumes, so that here and there a rose-pink wall is emblazoned with burnished copper and gold and spangled with emeralds. In the sombre ravine, that narrow band of colour is like a mineral vein in the rock, here revealed, to lose itself abruptly in the mountain beyond.

If you try to recall some places, you can bring to mind only a confused blur. Like certain types of men they make no decided impression. But the view of Guanajuato cast in its antique mould is one which memory retains—an Oriental scene done by a master.

From the hill of the Panteon the vision of Judea again arises before you,—the sombre landscape, the crowded flat-roofed city lying below, bathed in its limpid atmosphere. The Panteon crowns this hill—a little sleeping city. Its tombs are arranged in the thick walls, tier upon tier of identical size, like so many pigeon-holes,

each pigeon-hole being numbered. Pablo de Marez, or another, who once walked the busy streets below, comes at length to this city on the hills and becomes number 707. If after five years, payment is discontinued, his bones are taken from their pigeon-hole and thrown in a heap in the catacomb below, with countless other bones and skulls. He is evicted, as once he may have been evicted from his adobe hut for non-payment of rent, and after that he has no longer even a number. He has returned to the dust who lived so little removed from it all the days of his poor grey life. Another takes his pigeon-hole—an enemy, perhaps—and becomes number 707. But Pablo de Marez cares not.

Up from Guanajuato a host have come to be pigeon-holed and numbered, here to sojourn for a little while, only to be thrown into the bone heap at last and to lie thenceforth with their fathers. Dry is the air of this ancient city of the dead, and clear as crystal. Now and again a tenant does not dissolve into his elements but retains his form. The perishable clay puts on im-

perishability, by reason of the dryness, or because the Angel of the Darker Drink infused some ingredient into his potion.

Descending through a trap-door in the earth, like those pictured in the *Arabian Nights*, a spiral stair case leads to the grim abode beneath, where these grinning mummies dwell. They stand and wait, a ghoulish company in that weird light. The grave has yielded them back to the world, nameless and forgotten. A century ago, perhaps, it was they who drove the mules in the haciendas below, until the terrible Pie absorbed them at last, as now slowly it engulfs their descendants.

## CHAPTER XXV

“ HASTA LUEGO ”

FOR three years I have followed these trails—long enough to discover how little I really know of one of the most interesting, as well as charming and picturesque, countries in the world.

It is Old Mexico that appeals to the imagination and the Mexico of the future will never have the same charm. So, Old Japan, the incomparable land of the Cherry Blossom, is passing, and in its place arises the New Japan—made in the likeness of Europe. Yet Old Mexico will persist longer, because Japan is being modernised from within, whereas the remoulding of the Republic comes from without. The peon sticks to his sombrero; the Japanese adopts the derby. When the peon appears in a pot hat then, and



not till then, will sound the death knell of New Spain.

Here the influence of Colonial and Mediæval suggestions inspires a reverie—such as one may fall into on a summer’s day to the music of droning bees. But one needs to awake now and again under the stimulus of American life—which is as October frost—with its action and its aggressiveness.

For the last time, I have sped along the Wonder-street and Guanajuato is left behind. My train is steaming towards the border, taking me out of all Syrian illusions and Mexican dreams, back to the everyday reality of American bustle and din ; from the idle picturesque past to the busy and commonplace twentieth century.

As we traverse the sombre hills of Zacatecas and the mesquite plains of Chihuahua, never has this Cloudland seemed more beautiful. In its brooding silence it lures as never before—for I have eaten of the lotus. Far to the south lies the Vale of Tempe and the mountains of mother-of-pearl, forever wrapped in their

opaline mists. There the emerald cane-fields are glistening, the soft wind croons to the rustling corn and the cañon wren utters his merry laugh. Above the ceaseless rumble of the train, I seem to hear, faintly as in some inner ear, the deep muffled booming of the great bell of Morelia; while over the desert, little phantom pictures outline themselves in midair and vanish again. Now it is a canoe floating amidst the rushes of Patzcuaro, now the palm-like domes of Orizaba; Mitla, set as an antique gem in the hills; again the wonderful Tehuana women, in "nagua" and "juipil" and "juipil grande," walking erect under the cocoanut palms of the Isthmus.

But he who has drunk at the well of Guadalupe shall surely return to follow the old trails and know again the flavour of life in the open; shall pause once more under the village mangoes to hear soft voices calling—"Hasta luego."

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